MOUNT MUSIC

E. Œ. SOMERVILLE
AND MARTIN ROSS

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By the same Authors

SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M.
FURTHER EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M.
IN MR. KNOX'S COUNTRY
ALL ON THE IRISH SHORE
SOME IRISH YESTERDAYS
AN IRISH COUSIN
THE REAL CHARLOTTE
THE SILVER FOX
IRISH MEMORIES

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY,
CALCUTTA AND MADRAS.

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By

E. Œ. SOMERVILLE

AND

MARTIN ROSS

AUTHORS OF

"THE REAL CHARLOTTE," "SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M.," "ALL ON THE IRISH SHORE," ETC., ETC.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

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PREFACE

This book was planned some years ago by Martin Ross and myself. A few portions of it were written, and it was then put aside for other work.

Without her help and inspiration, it would not have been begun, and could not have been completed. I feel, therefore, that to join her name with mine on the title-page is my duty, as well as my pleasure.

E. Œ. SOMERVILLE.

MOUNT MUSIC

CHAPTER I

"CHRISTIAN, dost thou see them?" sang an elder brother, small enough to be brutal, large enough to hurt, while he twisted Christian's arm as though it were indeed the rope that it so much resembled.

"I won't say I saw them, because I didn't!" replied Christian, who had ceased to struggle, but was as far as ever from submission; "but if I had, you might twist my arm till it was like an old pig's tail and I wouldn't give in!"

Possibly John realised the truth of this defiance. He administered a final thump on what he believed to be Christian's biceps, and released her.

"Pretty rotten to spoil the game, and then tell lies," he said, with severity.

"I don't tell lies," said Christian, flitting like a gnat to the open window of the schoolroom. "You sang the wrong verse! It ought to have been *'hear* them,' and I *do!*"

Having thus secured the last word, Miss Christian Talbot-Lowry, aged nine in years, and ninety in spirit, sprang upon the window-sill, leapt lightly into a flower-bed, and betook herself to the resort most favoured by her, the kennels of her father's hounds.

What person is there who, having attained to such maturity as is required for legible record, shall presume to reconstruct, either from memory or from observation, the mind of a child? Certain mental attitudes may be recalled, certain

actions predicated in certain circumstances, but the stream of the mind, with its wayward currents, its secret eddies, flows underground, and its course can only be guessed at by tokens of speech and of action, that are like the rushes, and the yellow king-cups, and the emerald of the grass, that show where hidden waters run. Nothing more presumptuous than the gathering of a few of these tokens will here be attempted, and of these, only such as may help to explain the time when these children, emerging from childhood, began to play their parts in the scene destined to be theirs.

This history opens at a moment for Christian and her brethren when, possibly for the last time in their several careers, they asked nothing more of life. This was the beginning of the summer holidays; the sky was unclouded by a governess, the sunny air untainted by the whiff of a thought of a return to school. Anything might happen in seven weeks. The end of the world, for instance, might mercifully intervene, and, as this was Ireland, there was always a hope of a "rising," in which case it would be the boys' pleasing duty to stay at home and fight.

"Well, and Judith and I would fight, too," Christian would say, thinking darkly of the Indian knife that she had stolen from the smoking-room, for use in emergencies. She varied in her arrangements as to the emergency. Sometimes the foe was to be the Land Leaguers, who were much in the foreground at this time; sometimes she decided upon the English oppressors of a down-trodden Ireland, to whose slaughter, on the whole, her fancy most inclined. But whatever the occasion, she was quite determined she was not going to be outdone by the boys.

At nine years old, Christian was a little rag of a girl; a rag, but imbued with the spirit of the rag that is nailed to the mast, and flaunts, unconquered, until it is shot away. She had a small head, round and brown as a hazel-nut, and a thick mop of fine, bright hair, rebellious like herself, of the sort that goes with an ardent personality, waved and curled over her little poll, and generally ended the day in a tangle

only less intricate than can be achieved by a skein of silk. Of her small oval face, people were accustomed to say it was all eyes, an unoriginal summarising, but one that forced itself inevitably upon those who met Christian's eyes, clear and shining, of the pale brown that the sun knows how to waken in a shallow pool in a hill-stream, set in a dark fringe of lashes that were like the rushes round the pool. Before she could speak, it was told of her eyes that they would quietly follow some visitor, invisible to others, but obvious to her. Occasionally, after the mysterious power of speech—that is almost as mysterious as the power of reading—had come to her, she had scared the nursery by broken conversation with viewless confederates, defined by the nursery-maid as "quare turns that'd take her, the Lord save us!" and by her mother, as "something that she will outgrow, and the less said about it the better, darlings. Remember, she is the youngest, and you must all be very wise and kind——" (a formula that took no heed of punctuation, and was practically invariable).

But as Christian grew older the confederates withdrew, either that, or the protecting shell of reserve that guards the growth of individuality, interposed, and her dealings with things unseen ceased to attract the attention of her elders. It was John, her senior by two years, who preserved an interest, of an inquisitorial sort, in what he had decided to call the Troops of Midian. There was a sacerdotal turn about John. He had early decided upon the Church as his vocation, and only hesitated between the rôles of Primate of Ireland and Pope of Rome. He had something of the poet and enthusiast about him, and something also of the bully, and it was quite possible that he might do creditably in either position, but at this stage of his development his ecclesiastical proclivities chiefly displayed themselves in a dramatic study, founded upon that well-known Lenten hymn that puts a succession of searching enquiries, of a personal character, to a typical Christian. A missionary lecture on West Africa had supplied some useful hints as to the treatment of witches, and

Christian's name, and the occult powers with which she was credited, had indicated her as heroine of the piece.

On this particular afternoon the game had begun prosperously, with Christian as the Witch of Endor, and John as a blend of the Prophet Samuel and the Head Inquisitor of Spain. A smouldering saucer of sulphur, purloined by the witch herself from the kennels medicine-cupboard, gave a stimulating reality to the scene, even though it had driven the fox terriers, who habitually acted as the Witch's cats, to abandon their parts, and to hurry, sneezing and coughing indignantly, to the kitchen. The twins, Jimmy and Georgy, however, obligingly took their parts, and all was going according to ritual, when one of the sudden and annoying attacks of rebellion to which she was subject, came upon the Witch of Endor. The orthodox conclusion involved a penitential march through the kitchen regions, the Witch swathed in a sheet, and carrying lighted candles, while she was ceremonially flagellated by the Prophet with one of his father's hunting crops. This crowning moment was approaching, Christian had but to reply suitably to the intimidating riddles of the hymn, and the final act would open in all its solemnity. For, as has been said, the spirit of revolt whispered to her, and ingeniously persuaded her that the required recantation committed her to a falsehood.

As she told John, when the formal inquisition had passed through acrid dispute to torture, she didn't tell lies.

CHAPTER II

In the days when Christian Talbot-Lowry was a little girl, that is to say between the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century, the class known as Landed Gentry was still pre-eminent in Ireland. Tenants and tradesmen bowed down before them, with love sometimes, sometimes with hatred, never with indifference. The newspapers of their districts recorded their enterprises in marriage, in birth, in death, copiously, and with a servile rapture of detail that, though it is not yet entirely withheld from their survivors, is now bestowed with equal unction on those who, in many instances, have taken their places, geographically, if not their place, socially, in Irish every-day existence. There is little doubt but that after the monsters of the Primal Periods had been practically extinguished, a stray reptile, here and there, escaped the general doom, and, as Mr. Yeats says of his lug-worm, may have sung with "its grey and muddy mouth" of how "somewhere to North or West or South, there dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race" of Plesiosauridæ, or Pterodactyli. Even thus may this record be regarded; as partial, perhaps, but as founded on the facts of a not wholly to be condemned past.

Christian's father, Richard Talbot-Lowry, was a good-looking, long-legged, long-moustached Major, who, conforming beautifully to type, was a soldier, sportsman, and loyalist, as had been his ancestors before him. He had fought in the Mutiny as a lad of nineteen, and had been wounded in the thigh in a cavalry charge in a subsequent fight on the Afghan Frontier. Dick, like Horatius, "halted upon one knee" for the rest of his life, but since the injury gave him no trouble in the saddle, and did not affect the sit of his trousers, he did

not resent it, and possibly enjoyed its occasional exposition to an enquirer. When his father died, he left the Army, and, still true to the family traditions, proceeded to "settle down" at Mount Music, and to take into his own hands the management of the property.

Of the Talbot-Lowrys it may be truly said that the lot had fallen to them in a fair ground. Their ancestor, the Gentleman Adventurer of Queen Elizabeth's time, had had the eye for the country that, in a slightly different sense, had descended to his present representative. Mount Music House stood about midway of a long valley, on a level plateau of the hill from which it took its name, Cnocán an Ceoil Sidhe, which means the Hill of Fairy Music, and may, approximately, be pronounced "Knockawn an K'yole Shee." The hill melted downwards—no other word can express the velvet softness of those mild, grassy slopes—to the shore of the River Broadwater, a slow and lordly stream, that moved mightily down the wide valley, became merged for a space in Lough Kieraun, and thence flowed onwards, broad and brimming, bearded with rushes, passing like a king, cloaked in the splendours of the sunset, to its suicide in the far-away Atlantic. The demesne of Mount Music lay along its banks; in woods often, more often in pastures; with boggy places ringed with willows, lovely, in their seasons, with yellow flags, and meadowsweet, kingcups, ragwort and loosestrife. Its western boundary was the Ownashee, a mountain stream, a tributary of the great river, that came storming down from the hills, and, in times of flood, snatching, like a border-reiver, at sheep, and pigs, and fowl, tossing its spoils in a tumble of racing waves into the wide waters of its chieftain.

Mount Music House was large, intensely solid, practical, sensible, of that special type of old Irish country-house that is entirely remote from the character of the men that originated it, and can only be explained as the expiring cry of the English blood. How many Anglo-Irish great-great-grandfathers have not raised these monuments to their

English forbears, and then, recognising their obligations to their Irish mothers' ancestry, have filled them, gloriously, with horses and hounds, and butts of claret, and hungry poor relations unto the fourth and fifth generations? That they were a puissant breed, the history of the Empire, in which they have so staunchly borne their parts, can tell; their own point of view is fairly accurately summed up in Curran's verse:—

"If sadly thinking, with spirits sinking,
Could more than drinking my cares compose,
A cure for sorrow from sighs I'd borrow,
And hope to-morrow would end my woes.
But as in wailing there's nought availing,
And Death unfailing will strike the blow,
Then for that reason, and for a season,
Let us be merry before we go."

For Dick Talbot-Lowry, however, and many another like him, the merriment of his great-grandfather was indifferent compensation for the fact that his grandfather's and his father's consequent borrowings were by no means limited to cures for sorrow. Mortgages, charges, younger children (superfluous and abhorrent to the Heaven-selected Head of a Family)—all these had driven wedges deep into the Mount Music estate. But, fortunately, a good-looking, long-legged, ex-Hussar need not rely exclusively on his patrimony, while matrimony is still within the sphere of practical politics. When, at close on forty-one years of age (and looking no more than thirty), Dick left the Army, his next step was to make what was universally conceded to be "a very nice marriage," and on the whole, regarding it from the impartial standpoint of Posterity, the universe may be said to have been justified in its opinion.

Lady Isabel Christian was the daughter of an English Earl, and she brought with her to Mount Music twenty thousand golden sovereigns, which are very nice things, and

Lady Isabel herself was indisputably a nice thing too. She was tall and fair, and quite pretty enough (as Dick's female relatives said, non-committally). She was sufficiently musical to play the organ in church (which is also a statement provided with an ample margin); she was a docile and devoted wife, a futile and extravagant house-keeper, kindly and unpunctual, prolific without resentment; she regarded with mild surprise the large and strenuous family that rushed past her, as a mountain torrent might rush past an untidy flower garden, and, after nearly fourteen years of maternal experience, she had abandoned the search for a point of contact with their riotous souls, and contented herself with an indiscriminate affection for their very creditable bodies. Lady Isabel had—if the saying may be reversed—"*les qualités de ses défauts,*" and these latter could have no environment less critical and more congenial than that in which it had pleased her mother to place her. It was right and fitting that the wife of the reigning Talbot-Lowry of Mount Music, should inevitably lead the way at local dinner-parties; should, with ladylike inaudibleness, declare that "this Bazaar" or "Village Hall" was open. It was no more than the duty of Major Talbot-Lowry (D.L., and J.P.) to humanity, that his race should multiply and replenish the earth, and Lady Isabel had unrepiningly obliged humanity to the extent of four sons and two daughters. Major Dick's interest in the multiplication was, perhaps, more abstract than hers.

"Yes," he would say, genially, to an enquiring farmer, "I have four ploughmen and two dairymaids!"

Or, to a friend of soldiering days: "Four blackguard boys and only a brace of the Plentiful Sex!"

A disproportion for which, by some singular action of the mind, he took to himself considerable credit.

Miss Frederica Coppinger (who will presently be introduced) was accustomed to scandalise Lady Isabel by the assertion that paternal affection no more existed in men than in tom-cats. An over-statement, no doubt, but one that was quite free from malice or disapproval. Undoubtedly,

a father should learn to bear the yoke in his youth, and Dick was old, as fathers go. It cannot be denied that when the Four Blackguards began to clamour for mounts with the hounds, and the representatives of the Plentiful Sex outgrew the donkey, Major Talbot-Lowry had moments of resentment against his offspring, during which his wife, like a wise doe-rabbit, found it safest to sweep her children out of sight, and to sit at the mouth of the burrow, having armed herself with an appealing headache and a better dinner than usual. The children liked him; not very much, but sufficient for general decency and the Fifth Commandment. They loved their mother, but despised her, faintly; (again, not too much for compliance with the Commandment aforesaid). Finally, it may be said that Major Dick and Lady Isabel were sincerely attached to one another, and that she took his part, quite frequently, against the children.

If, accepting the tom-cat standard of paternity, Dick Talbot-Lowry had a preference for one kitten more than another, that kitten was, indisputably, Christian.

"The little devil knows the hounds better than I do!" he would say to a brother M.F.H. at the Puppy Show. "Her mother can't keep her out of the kennels. And the hounds are mad about her. I believe she could take 'em walking-out single-handed!"

To which the brother M.F.H. would probably respond with perfidious warmth: "By Jove!" while, addressing that inner confidant, who always receives the raciest share of any conversation, he would say that *he'd* be jiggered before he'd let any of *his* children mess the hounds about with petting and nonsense.

In justice to Lady Isabel, it should be said that she shared the visiting M.F.H.'s view of the position, though regarding it from a different angle.

"Christian, my dearest child," she said, on the day following the Puppy Show that had coincided with Christian's eighth birthday, when, after a long search, she had discovered her youngest daughter, seated, tailor-wise, in one of

the kennels, the centre of a mat of hounds. "This is *not* a fit place for you! You don't know *what* you may not bring back with you——"

"If you mean fleas, Mother," replied Christian, firmly, "the hounds have *none,* except what *I* bring them from Yummie." (Yummie was Lady Isabel's dog, a sickly and much despised spaniel). "The Hounds!" Christian laughed a little; the laugh that is the flower of the root of scorn. Then her eyes softened and glowed. "Darlings!" she murmured, kissing wildly the tan head of the puppy who, but the day before, had been reft from her charge.

CHAPTER III

THERE are certain persons who are born heralds and genealogists; there are many more to whom these useful gifts have been denied. With apologies to both classes, to the one for sins of omission, to the other in the reverse sense, I find that an excerpt from the Talbot-Lowry pedigree must be inflicted upon them.

With all brevity, let it be stated that Dick Talbot-Lowry possessed a father, General John Richard, and General John Richard had an only sister, Caroline. Caroline, fair and handsome, like all her family, was "married off," as was the custom of her period, at the age of seventeen, to elderly Anthony Coppinger, chiefly for the reason that he was the owner of Coppinger's Court, with a very comfortable rent-roll, and a large demesne, that marched, as to its eastern boundaries, with that of Mount Music, and was, as it happened, divided from it by no more than the Ownashee, that mountain river of which mention has been made. It was, therefore, exceedingly advisable that the existing friendly relations should be cemented, as far as was practicable, and the fair and handsome Caroline was an obvious and suitable adhesive. To Anthony and Caroline, two children were born; Frederica, of whom more hereafter, and Thomas. By those who lay claim to genealogic skill, it will now be apparent that these were the first cousins of Dick Talbot-Lowry. Thomas went into the Indian Army, and in India met and married a very charming young lady, Theresa Quinton, a member of an ancient Catholic family in the North of England, and an ardent daughter of her Church. In India, a son was born to them, and Colonel Tom, who adored his wife, remarking that these things were out of his line, made

no objection to her bringing up the son, St. Lawrence Anthony, in her own religion, and hoped that the matter would end there. Mrs. Coppinger, however, remembering St. Paul's injunctions to believing wives and unbelieving husbands, neither stopped nor stayed her prayers and exhortations, until, just before the birth of a second child, she had succeeded in inducing Tom Coppinger—(just "to please her, and for the sake of a quiet life," as he wrote, apologetically, to his relations and friends, far away in Ireland) to join her Communion. She then died, and her baby followed her. Colonel Tom, a very sad and lonely man, came to England and visited St. Lawrence Anthony at the school selected for him by his mother; then he returned to his regiment in India, and was killed, within a year of his wife's death, in a Frontier expedition. He left Larry in the joint guardianship of his sister, Frederica, and his first cousin, Dick Talbot-Lowry, with the request that the former would live with the boy at Coppinger's Court, and that the latter would look after the property until the boy came of age and could do so himself; he also mentioned that he wished his son's education to continue on the lines laid down by his "beloved wife, Theresa."

It must, with regret, be stated, that the relatives and friends in far-away Ireland, instead of admiring "poor Tom's" fidelity to his wife's wishes, murmured together that it was very unfortunate that "poor Theresa" had not died when Larry was born, as, in that case, this "disastrous change of religion" would not have taken place. Taking into consideration the fact that Larry was to live among his Irish cousins, it is possible that from the point of view of expediency, the relations and friends were in some degree justified.

Ireland, it is almost superfluous to observe, has long since decided to call herself The Island of Saints, an assertion akin to the national challenge of trailing the coat-tails, and believers in hereditary might, perhaps, be justified in assuming a strictly celibate sainthood. Be that as it may, Irish people

have ever been prone to extremes, and, in spite of the proverb, there are some extremes that never touch, and chief among them are those that concern religion. Religion, or rather, difference of religion, is a factor in every-day Irish life of infinitely more potency than it is, perhaps, in any other Christian country. The profundity of disagreement is such that in most books treating of Ireland, that are not deliberately sectarian, a system of water-tight compartments in such matters is carefully established. It is, no doubt, possible to write of human beings who live in Ireland, without mentioning their religious views, but to do so means a drastic censoring of an integral feature of nearly all mundane affairs. This it is to live in the Island of Saints.

In this humble account of the late Plesiosauridæ and their contemporaries, it is improbable that any saint of any sect will be introduced; one assurance, at least, may be offered without reservation. Those differing Paths, that alike have led many wayfarers to the rest that is promised to the saints, will be treated with an equal reverence and respect. But no rash undertakings can be given as touching the wayfarers, or even their leaders, who may chance to wander through these pages. Neither is any personal responsibility accepted for the views that any of them may express. One does not blame the gramophone if the song is flat, or if the reciter drops his h's.

After this exhaustive exordium it is tranquillising to return to the comparative simplicities of the existence of the young Talbot-Lowrys. Those summer holidays of the year 1894 were made ever memorable for them by the re-inhabiting of Coppinger's Court. Mount Music was a lonely place; it lay on the river, about midway between the towns of Cluhir and Riverstown, either of which meant a five or six mile drive, and to meet such friends and acquaintances as the neighbourhood afforded, was, in winter, a matter confined to the hunting-field, and in summer was restricted, practically, to the incidence of lawn-tennis parties. Possibly the children of Mount Music, thus thrown upon their own resources,

developed a habit of amusing themselves that was as advantageous to their caretakers as to their characters. It certainly enhanced very considerably their interest in the advent of Master St. Lawrence Coppinger. He became the subject of frequent and often heated discussions, the opinion most generally held, and stated with a fine simplicity, being that he would prove to be "a rotter."

"India," John said, "had the effect of making people effemeral."

"Effeminate, ass!" corrected Richard, shortly.

"Anyhow," said a Twin, charitably, "we can knock that out of him!"

"Anyhow," said Judith, next to Richard in age and authority, "if he *is* a rotter, he can go into the Brats' band. You want someone decent," she added, addressing the Twin, whose remark she felt to have savoured of presumption.

This family had, for purposes of combat and of general entertainment, divided itself into two factions, that fought endlessly among the woods and shrubberies. A method had been recently introduced by Richard of utilising the harmless, necessary pocket-handkerchief as a sling for the projection of gravel, and its instant popularity had resulted in the denuding of the avenues of ammunition, and in arousing a great and just fury in the bosom of the laundress.

"God knows it isn't me has all the hankershiffs holed this way!" she pointed out. "Thim children is the divil outlawed. Thim'd gallop the woods all the night, like the deer!"

The assortment of the family had been decided rather on the basis of dignity, than on that of a desire to equalise the sides, and thus it befel that Richard, Judith, and John, with the style and title of The Elder Statesmen, were accustomed to drive before them the junior faction of The Brats, consisting of the Twins, Christian, and the dogs, Rinka and Tashpy, with a monotony of triumph that might have been expected to pall, had not variety been imparted by the invention of the punishments that were inflicted upon prisoners.

There had been a long and hot July day of notable warfare. The Twins, if small, were swift and wily; even Christian had justified her adoption by a stealthy and successful raid upon the opposition gravel heap. A long and savage series of engagements had ensued, that alternated between flights, and what Christian, blending recollections of nursery doctoring with methods of Indian warfare, designated "stomach-attacks." It was while engaged in one of the latter forms of assault that Christian was captured, and, being abandoned by her comrades, was haled by the captors before Richard, the Eldest Statesmen. A packed Court-martial of enemies speedily found the prisoner guilty, and the delicious determining of the punishment absorbed the attention of the Court. John, with a poet's fancy, suggested that the criminal should be compelled to lick a worm. Judith, more practical, advocated her being sent to the house to steal some jam. "I forgot to," she said.

The Court was held in the Council Chamber, a space between the birches and hazels on the bank of the Ownashee; a fair and green room, ceiled with tremulous leaves, encircled and made secret by high bracken, out of which rose the tarnished-silver stems of the birch trees and the multitudinous hazel-boughs, and furnished with boulders of limestone, planted deep in a green fleece of mingled moss and grass. On one side only was it open to the world, yet on that same side it was most effectively divided from it, by the swift brown stream, speeding down to the big river, singing its shallow summer song as it sped.

Richard, Eldest Statesman, gazed in dark reflection upon the prisoner, meditating her sentence; the prisoner, young enough to tremble in the suspense, old enough to enjoy the nerve-tension and the moment of drama, gazed back at him. Her hair lay in damp rings, and hung in rats'-tails about her forehead. Her small face, with the silver-clear skin, stippled here and there with tiny freckles, was faintly flushed, and moist with the effort of her last great

but unavailing run for freedom; her wide eyes were like brown pools scooped from the brown flow of the Ownashee.

"I adjudge," said Richard, in an awful voice, "that the prisoner shall amass three buckets of the best gravel. The same to be taken from the shallow by the seventh stepping-stone."

The prisoner's little brown arm, with a hand thin and brown as a monkey's, went up; the recognised protest.

"Not the seventh, most noble Samurai," she said, anxiously; " Won't it do from the strand?"

"I have spoken," replied the Eldest Stateman, inflexibly.

"Then I won't!" exclaimed Christian; "I—I couldn't! The river giddys me so awfully when I stand still on the stones——"

"Prisoner!" returned Richard, "once the law is uttered, it can't be unuttered! Off you go!"

"Well then, and I *will* go!" said Christian, with a wriggle so fierce and sudden that it loosed the grip of her guards. It is even possible that the ensuing lightning dart for freedom might have succeeded, but for the unfortunate fidelity of her allies, Rinka and Tashpy. The one sprang at her brief skirt and caught it, the other got between her legs. She fell, and was delivered again into the hands of the enemy.

Richard was not a bully, but Mrs. Sarah Battle was not more scrupulous than he in observing the rigour of the game. Christian was manacled with the belt of her own overall, and was hauled along the golden, but despised, gravel of the river strand, to the spot whence the stepping-stones started.

"I'll do this much for you," said the Eldest Statesman, relaxing a little, "I'll go first and carry the bucket."

He dragged Christian on to the first of the big, flat, old stepping-stones, Judith assisting from the rear, and, with increasing difficulty, two more stones were achieved. Then they paused for breath, and a sudden whirlwind of passion came upon the captive. She began to struggle and dance upon the flat stone, madly endeavouring to free her hands,

while she shrieked to the dastard Twins to come to her rescue.

"Cowards! Cowards! I hate you all——"

"Better let her go," whispered Judith, who knew better than her Chief what Christian's storms meant.

Richard hesitated, and, as in a mediæval romance, at this moment a champion materialised.

Not the Twins, lying like leopards along the higher boughs of a neighbouring alder, deeply enjoying the spectacle, but a boy, smaller than Richard, who came crashing through the bushes on the Coppinger's Court side of the Ownashee. Arrived at the ford, he stayed neither his pace nor his stride, and before the Eldest Statesman, much hampered by his prisoner and the bucket, could put up any sort of defence, the unknown rescuer had sprung across the stepping-stones, and, catching him by the shoulders, had, by sheer force of speed and surprise, hurled him into the river.

Thus did Larry Coppinger, informally but effectively, introduce himself to his second-cousins, the Talbot-Lowrys.

CHAPTER IV

A FORTNIGHT or so after the moving incidents that have just been recited, Miss Frederica Coppinger, and her nephew, St. Lawrence of that ilk, were spending a long and agreeable Sunday afternoon with their relatives at Mount Music, elders and youngsters being segregated, after their kind, and to their mutual happiness.

Major Talbot-Lowry, very well pleased with himself, very tall and authoritative, was standing, from force of habit, on the rug in front of the fire-place in the Mount Music drawing-room, and was cross-examining Miss Coppinger on her proposed arrangements for herself and her nephew, while he drank his tea in gulps, each succeeded by burnishing processes, with a brilliant silk bandanna handkerchief, such as are necessitated by a long and drooping moustache.

All good-looking people are aware of their good looks, but the gift of enjoying them, that had been lavishly bestowed on Dick, is denied to many; on the other hand, the companion gift, of realising when they are becoming pleasures of memory, had been withheld from him. Dick was of the happy temperament that believes in the exclusive immortality of his own charms, and he was now enjoying his conversation with his cousin none the less for the discovery that Miss Coppinger, who was younger than he, had preserved her youth very much less successfully than he had done.

The cross-examination had moved on to the subject of Larry's religion, and the combative fervour of Major Dick's Protestantism might have edified John Knox.

"But look here, Frederica," he said, putting down his cup and saucer, with a crash, on the high mantelpiece, "you don't

mean to tell me that the boy has to go to Mass with the servants—on the cook's lap, I suppose—on the outside car! Good Heeavens! Poor old Tom! Talk about turning in his grave! I should think he was going head over heels in it by this time!"

This referred to the late Colonel Coppinger, the genuineness of whose conversion to his wife's Church had never been accepted by Major Talbot-Lowry.

"My *dear* Dick!" said Lady Isabel.

Miss Coppinger closed her lips tightly with an air of high self-control.

"That is a matter of opinion!" she said blandly. "Tom was perfectly aware of what changing his religion involved, in *this* country—though it's probably quite different in India. In any case, the thing is done, and as I believe it to be my Duty to send Larry to his chapel, to his chapel he shall go!"

Unimaginative people, or those of limited vocabulary, affixed to Miss Coppinger the ancient label: "A typical old maid," and considered that no further definition was required; and, since her appearance conformed in some degree with stage traditions, there is something to be said for them. If labels are to be employed, even the least complex of human beings would suggest a much-travelled portmanteau, covered with tags and shreds from hotels and railways. Frederica shall not be labelled; let it suffice to say that she was tall and thin, and nearer fifty than forty (which was a far greater age thirty years ago than it is now), and that she had a sense of fair play that was proof against her zeal as an Irish Church-woman. It is true that she mentioned what she regarded as the disaster of Larry's religion in her prayers, but she did so without heat, leaving the matter, without irreverence, to the common sense of Larry's Creator, who, she felt must surely recognise the disadvantages of the position as it stood.

"I cannot possibly interfere with Larry's religion," pursued Miss Coppinger, with a defiant eye on her cousin, "and as soon as we are a little more settled down I shall ask the

priest to lunch. Farther than that I don't feel called upon to go."

"Draw the line at dinner, eh?" said Major Dick, with large and humorous tolerance: "*I* know very little about the feller—he's newly come to the parish—he mayn't be a bad sort for all I know—I'm bound to say he's got a black-muzzled look about him, but we might go farther and fare worse. I should certainly have him to lunch if I were you. Have a good big joint of roast beef, and don't forget to give him his whack of whisky!"

"I never have whisky in the house," said Miss Coppinger repressively. "Claret, I *could* give him——?"

Major Talbot-Lowry looked down at his cousin with the condescending amusement that he felt to be the meed of female godliness especially when allied with temperance principles.

"Well, claret might do for once in a way," he conceded, shaking his long legs to take the creases out of his trousers, "and you mightn't find Father Sweeny so anxious to repeat the dose—and that mightn't be any harm either! I daresay you wouldn't object to that, Frederica! Well, good-bye, ladies! I'm going down to the kennels——"

Lady Isabel's and Miss Coppinger's eyes followed him, as he swung, with that light halt in his leisurely stride, down the long drawing-room, trolling in the high baritone, that someone had pleased him by likening to a cavalry trumpet,

"Oh, Father McCann was a beautiful man,
But a bit of a rogue, a bit of a rogue!
He was full six feet high, he'd a cast in his eye,
And an illigant brogue, an illigant brogue!"

In both his wife's and his cousin's faces was the same look, the look that often comes into women's faces when, unperceived, they regard the sovereign creature. Future generations may not know that look, but in the faces of these women, born in the earlier half of the nineteenth century,

there was something of awe, and of indulgence, of apprehension, and of pity. Dick was so powerful, so blundering, so childlike. Miss Frederica expressed something of their common thought when she said:

"Dick seems to forget that he is Larry's guardian as well as I. Also that Larry is a Roman Catholic, and it is not only useless but dishonourable to ignore it!"

It has been said that Lady Isabel had *les qualitiés de ses défauts;* in Miss Coppinger's case the words may be restored to their rightful sequence. She had the inevitable *défauts de ses qualités*. The sense of duty was as prominent a feature of her soul as a hump on her long straight back would have been, but toleration was inconspicuous. She ran straight herself, and though she could forgive deviations on the part of others, she could not forget them. She was entirely and implacably Protestant, a typical member of that Church that expects friendship from its votaries, but leaves their course of action to their own consciences. It was a very successful example of the malign humour of Fate that Miss Coppinger's ward should belong to the other Church, that exacts not only obedience, but passion, and it was a master-stroke that Frederica's sense of duty should compel her to enforce her nephew to compliance with its demands.

"Dear Frederica, Dick will leave *all* religious things to you, I know——" warbled Lady Isabel, in her gentle, musical voice, that suggested something between the tones of a wood pigeon and an ocarina. "And they couldn't be in better hands!"

"But my dear Isabel, that is precisely what I complain of! Dick's solitary suggestion has been that we should send Larry to Winchester, which is perfectly impracticable! I entirely agree with him, but, unfortunately, *I* know that it is our duty to send him to one of those——" Miss Coppinger hesitated, swallowed several adjectives, and ended with Christian tameness—"one of those special schools for Roman Catholics."

"Well, dear, I daresay it won't make very much differ-

ence," consoled Lady Isabel. "I have always heard that Monkshurst was a charming school, and dear Larry will be *so* well off—I don't suppose his religion will interfere in *any* way. It seldom does, does it?"

"Not, I admit, unless he wanted a job in this country!" began Miss Coppinger grimly, and again remembered that intolerance was not to be encouraged. "The end of it is that I shall endeavour to do *my duty*—which is, apparently, to do everything that I most entirely disapprove of—and that on the day Larry is twenty-one, I shall march out of Coppinger's Court, and dance a jig, and then he may have the Pope to stay with him if he likes!"

While Miss Coppinger was thus belabouring and releasing her conscience in the drawing-room, quite another matter was engaging the attention of her ward, and of his entertainers at the school-room tea-table. This was no less a thing than the dissolving of the existing Bands, and the formation of a new society, to be known as "The Companions of Finn."

Larry Coppinger's entrance, literally at a bound, into the Talbot-Lowry family group, had landed him, singularly enough, into the heart of their affection and esteem. He was now the originator of this revolutionary scheme, and having in him that special magnetic force that confers leadership, the scheme was being put through.

"The point is," he said, eagerly, 'that when we are split up into two bands, we can do nothing much, but the lot of us together might—might make quite a difference."

"Difference to what?" said Richard, ex-chief of the Elder Statesmen, unsympathetically. Like his father before him, he disliked change.

"Well, hold on!" said Larry, quickly, "wait just one minute, and I'll tell you. I got the notion out of a book I found in the library. I don't expect I'd have thought of it myself——" Larry's transparent sky-blue eyes sought Richard's appealingly. "It's—it's only poems, you know, but it's most frightfully interesting—I brought it with me——"

"Oh—poems!" said Richard, without enthusiasm. "Are they long ones?"

"I don't seem to care so awfully much about poetry," abetted Judith, late Second-in-command.

John looked sapient, and said, neutrally, that some poetry wasn't bad.

The Twins, who were engaged in a silent but bitter struggle for the corpse of a white rabbit, recently born dead, made no comment. Only Christian, her small hands clenched together into a brown knot, her eyes fastened on Larry's flushed face, murmured:

"Go on, Larry!"

Larry went on.

"It's called the Spirit of the Nation," he said. "It's full of splendid stuff about Ireland, and the beastly way England's treated her. It sort of—sort of put the notion into my head that we might start some sort of a Fenian band, and that some day we might—well," he turned very red, and ended with a rush, "we might be able to strike a blow for Ireland!"

"Moy oye!" said Richard, intensifying his favourite invocation in his surprise, "but what's wrong with Ireland?"

The position wanted but the touch of opposition. Larry rather well bet Richard that there was plenty wrong with her! Penal laws! Persecution! Saxon despots grinding their heels into a down-trodden people! Revolution! Liberation! Larry had a tongue that was hung loosely in his head and was a quick servant to his brain.

"Of course I know we're rather young—well, you're nearly fourteen, Richard, and I'm thirteen and three months, that's not so awfully young. Anyway, everything's got to have a beginning——" He glowed upon his audience of six, his fair hair in a shock, his eyes and his cheeks in a blaze, and one, at least, of that audience caught fire.

The Revolutionary or Reformer, who hesitates at becoming a bore, is unworthy of his high office; and Larry, like most of his class, required but little encouragement. He produced

a large book, old and shabby, the green and gold of its covers stained and faded, but still of impressive aspect.

"There are heaps of them, and they're all jolly good. It's rather hard to choose——" began the Revolutionary with a shade of nervousness. Then he again met Christian's eyes, shining and compelling, and took heart from them.

"Well, there's 'Fontenoy,' of course that's a ripper—Well, I don't know what *you'll* all think, but *I* think this is a jolly good one," he said with a renewal of defiance, and began to read, at first hurriedly, but gathering confidence and excitement as he went on:

"Did they dare, did they dare, to slay Owen Roe O'Neill?
Yes, they slew with poison, him they feared to meet with steel.
May God wither up their hearts! May their blood cease to flow!
May they walk in living death, who poisoned Owen Roe!
We thought you would not die—we were sure you would not go,
And leave us in our utmost need to Cromwell's cruel blow—
Sheep without a shepherd, when the snow shuts out the sky—
Oh! Why did you leave us, Owen? Why did you die?"

The Elder Statesmen listened in critical silence, while Larry, not without stumbles, stormed on through the eight verses of the poem. When he had finished it, there was a pause. The audience was impressed, even though they had no intention of admitting the fact. Christian gave a tremendous sigh. The contest for the defunct rabbit, that had been arrested, broke out again, fiercely, but with caution. Then Richard said, dubiously:

"Well, that's all right, Larry—I meant it's jolly sad, and awfully good poetry, I'm sure—but how on earth are you going to work a show out of it? I can't see——"

"Unless," interrupted Judith, thoughtfully, "unless we sort of acted it——?"

John, who loved "dressing up," woke to life; even Richard began to see daylight.

"That's not a bad notion, Judy!" he said briskly: "bags I Cromwell! Larry, you can be Owen what's-his-name."

Larry came down like a shot bird from the sphere of romance to which the poem had borne him.

"I hadn't thought of any scheme," he said, pulling himself together; "I only wanted to give you a kind of notion of the rotten way England's always treated Ireland——"

"But let's!" cried Christian; "let's act the whole book!"

Truisms are of their essence dull, but they must sometimes be submitted to, and the truism as to a book's possible influence on the young and impressionable cannot here be avoided. What it is that decides if the book is to stamp itself on the plastic mind, or if the mind is to assert itself and stamp on the book, is a detail that admits less easily of dogmatism. The Companionage of Finn remained in being for but two periods of holiday. Before the boys had returned to school, it had seen its best days; the scheme for an armed invasion of England had been abandoned, even the more matured project of storming Dublin Castle was set aside; by the end of the Christmas holidays it had been formally dissolved.

It is not easy to understand, it is still harder to explain what it was in those fierce denunciations and complaints, outcome of that time of general revolt, the "Roaring Forties" of the nineteenth century, that made them echo in Larry's heart, nor why the restless, passionate spirit that inspired them should have remained with him, a perturbing influence from which he never wholly escaped. His young soul burned with hatred of England, borrowed from the Bards of "The Nation" Office; he lay awake at nights, stringing rhymes in emulation of their shouts of fury, or picturing rebellions, of which he was to be the leader and hero. Larry's enthusiasms were wont to devour not him only, but also his friends. It is impossible to escape from the conclusion that the career of the Companionage of Finn was abbreviated by

Larry's determination to recite to the Companions of the Order, in season and out of season, the poems by which, during his first Irish summer, he was possessed. There came a time when he had, as he believed, put away childish things, that, returning to these venerable trumpet-blasts, he asked himself, in the arrogance of youth, how these stale metaphors, these conventional phrases, these decorations as meretricious as stage jewellry, and metres that cantered along, as he told himself, like solemn old circus-horses, could have had the power to shake his voice and fill his eyes with tears, as he spoke them to Christian, who had so soon become his sole audience.

The strange thing was, as he acknowledged to himself, that while he could mock at them as poetry, he could not ignore their power. The intensity of their hatred, and of their sincerity, made itself felt, as the light of the sun will shine through the crude commonness of a vulgar stained-glass window.

CHAPTER V

THERE was one person who viewed the enthusiastic intimacy that had sprung up between the houses of Coppinger and Talbot-Lowry, with a disapproval as deep as it was prejudiced. It was a person whose opinion might, by the thoughtless, be considered unimportant, but in this the thoughtless would greatly err. Robert Evans was the butler at Mount Music. He had held that position since the year 1859, from which statement a brief and unexacting calculation will establish the fact that he had taken office when his present master was no more than twenty-one years old and, it being now 1894, he had so continued for 35 years. Possibly a vision of an adoring and devoted retainer may here present itself. If so, it must be immediately dispelled. In Mr. Evans' opinion, such devotion and adoration as the case demanded, were owed to him by the House on which he had for so long a time bestowed the boon of his presence, and those who were privileged with his acquaintance had no uncertainty in the matter, since his age, his length of service, his fidelity, and the difficulties with which he daily contended, formed the main subjects of his conversation.

In the palmier days of the Irish gentry there were many households in which the religion of the servants was a matter of considerable importance, and those who could afford exclusiveness, were accustomed to employ only Protestants as indoor servants. This may seem like an unwarrantable invasion of the inner fortress of another individual, making his views spiritual responsible for his fortunes temporal. But in Ireland, in the earlier half of the troubled nineteenth century, such differentiation was inspired not by bigotry,

but by fear. When a man's foes might be, and often were, those of his own household, that his servants should be of his own religion was almost his only safeguard against espionage. There is somewhat to be said on both sides; it will not be said here, but that there have been times in Ireland when such precautions were required, cannot be ignored.

Robert Evans was a survivor of such a period. Time was when he strutted, autocratic and imperious as a turkey-cock, ruler of a flock of lesser fowl, all of his own superior creed; brave days when he and Mrs. Dixon, the housekeeper, herded and headed, respectively, a bevy of "decent Protestant maids" into Family Prayers every morning, and packed "the full of two covered cars" off to the Knockceoil Parish Church on Sundays. Evans rarely went to church, believing that such disciplines were superfluous for one in a state of grace, but the glory of the House of Talbot-Lowry demanded a full and rustling pew of female domestics, while the coachman, and a footman or a groom, were generally to be relied on to give a masculine stiffening to the party. With Lady Isabel's *régime* had come a slackening of moral fibre, a culpable setting of attainments, or of convenience, above creed, in the administration of the household. Once had Lady Isabel been actually overheard by Evans, offering to a friend, in excuse for the indifferent show made by her household in the parish church, the offensive explanation that "R.C.'s were so sympathetic, and so easy to find, while Protestants were not only scarce, but were so proud of being Protestants, and expected so much admiration"—here she had perceived the presence of Evans, and had unavailingly begun upon the weather, but Evans' deep-seated suspicions as to the laxity of the English Church had been confirmed.

It is possible that the greatest shock that Evans was capable of sustaining was administered when he heard of the secession to the enemy of Colonel Tom Coppinger. Only second to it was the discovery that Colonel Tom's poisoned offspring was to be received at Mount Music and admitted to the fellowship of its children.

"No!" Evans said to Mrs. Dixon, standing on the hearth-rug in the sanctuary of the housekeeper's room, one wet afternoon, shortly after the Coppinger return: "I see changes here, better and worse, good and bad, but I didn't think I'd live to see what I seen to-day—the children of this house consorting with a Papist!"

"Fie!" said Mrs. Dixon, without conviction. She was fat and easy-tempered, and though ever anxious to conciliate him whom she respected and feared as "Mr. Eevans," her powers of dissimulation often failed at a pinch of this kind.

Mr. Evans looked at his table-companion with a contempt to which she had long been resigned. He was a short, thin, bald man, with a sharp nose curved like a reaping-hook, iron-grey whiskers and hair, and fierce pale blue eyes. Later on, Christian, in the pride of her first introduction to Tennyson, had been inspired by his high shoulders and black tailed coat to entitle him "The many-wintered crow," and the name was welcomed by her fellows, and registered in the repository of phrases and nicknames that exists in all well-regulated families.

"'Fie!'" he repeated after Mrs. Dixon, witheringly. "I declare before God, Mrs. Dixon, if I was to tell you the Pope o' Rome was coming to dinner next Sunday, it's all you'd say would be 'Fie!'"

Mrs. Dixon received this supposition of catastrophe with annoying calm, and even reverted to Mr. Evans' earlier statement in a manner that might have bewildered a less experienced disputant than he.

"Well, indeed, Mr. Eevans," she said, appeasingly, "I'd say he was a nice child enough, and the very dead spit of the poor Colonel. I dunno what harm he could do the children at all?"

The Prophet Samuel could scarcely have regarded Saul, when he offered those ill-fated apologies relative to King Agag, with a more sinister disfavour than did Evans view Mrs. Dixon.

"I'll say one thing to you, Mrs. Dixon," he said, moving

to the door with that laborious shuffle that had inspired one of the hunted and suffering tribe of his pantry-boys to the ejaculation: "I thank God, there's more in his boots than what's there room for!"—"and I'll say it once, and that's enough! As sure as God made little apples, trouble and disgrace will follow jumpers!"

Mrs. Dixon, no less than Evans, disapproved of those who changed their religion, but this denunciation did not seem to her to apply.

"That poor child's no jumper!" she called after her antagonist; " 'twasn't his fault he was born the way he was!"

Evans slammed the door.

Mrs. Dixon dismissed the controversy from her easy mind, looked at the clock, and laid down her knitting.

"Miss Christian'll be looking for her birthday cake!" she said to herself, hoisting her large person from her chair. Even as she did so, there came a rapping, quick and urgent, at the window. "Look at that now!" said Mrs. Dixon. "I wouldn't doubt that child to be wanting the world in her pocket before it was made!"

"Dixie! Dixie! Open the window! Hurry! I want you!"

Christian's face, surmounted by a very old hunting-cap, and decorated with a corked moustache, appeared at the window.

"The Lord save us, child! What have you done to yourself? And what are you doing out there in the wet?" answered Mrs. Dixon, reprovingly; "sure the cake won't be baked for ten minutes yet."

"I don't want the cake. I only want some biscuits, *please*. Dixie, and hurry! Amazon's bolted, and Cottingham's asked *me* to catch her! If you *had* a bone, Dixie, she'd simply——"

Mrs. Dixon was gone. She disapproved exceedingly of Christian's rôle as kennel-boy, but as, since Christian's first birthday, she had never refused her anything, she was not prepared on her tenth to break so well-established a habit.

"I dunno in the world why Mr. Cottingham should make a young lady like you do his business!" she said, putting the requisition bait into Christian's eager, up-stretched hands, "and if your Mamma could see you——"

"Oh, well done, Dixie! What a lovely bone! Oh, thank you most awfully!" interrupted Christian, snatching at the danties provided, and flitting away through the grey veils of the rain, a preposterous little figure, clad in a ragged kennel-coat, that had been long since discarded by the huntsman, a pair of couples slung round her neck, and a crop in her hand.

It was a chilly, wet August afternoon. It had rained for the past three days, and was, by all appearances, prepared to continue to do so for three more. Christian ran across the fields to the kennels, regardless of wet overhead or underfoot, and oblivious of the corked moustache, which ran too, almost as fast as she did. She had made a *détour* to avoid the schoolroom windows. Her birthday party was toward, and charades (accounting for her moustache) were in full swing. But the message from Cottingham, secretly conveyed together with the couples, by the pantry boy, transcended in importance all other human affairs. She had slipped away from her fellows, and having endured the hunting cap and the kennel coat, as the wear suitable to such an occasion, she had not lost a minute in coming to the horn.

Cottingham, Major Talbot-Lowry's First Whip and kennel huntsman, a single-souled little Devonshire man, whose dyed hair was the solitary indication of the age it was intended to conceal, awaited her outside the kennels.

"Well, Missie, I knew you'd come," he said, approvingly. "It's Amazon that's away—that little badger-pye bitch we got last week—I 'ad to give 'er a bit of a 'iding—she tried to run a sheep when we was walkin' out last evening—she's a rewengeful sort, she is, and very artful, and when we gets near kennels, her took an' bolted past Jimmy over the 'ill, an' I says to Jimmy, 'Why you fool' I says——"

The tale continued at length, and with those repetitions

and recapitulations peculiar to the simple, but by no means short annals of the poor, and especially of the English poor. Yet, Christian, the impatient, the ardent, stood and listened with respectful and absorbed interest. Cottingham might be elderly, egotistic, long-winded, but at this period of her career, Christian's hot heart beat throb for throb with his, and the thought, as he said, of "that pore little bitch stoppin' out, and maybe spoilt, so that there'd be nothin' for us but to shoot her, through learnin' to run sheep," had precisely the same horror for her as for him.

"I couldn't, so to speak, lay me 'and on 'er now; her wouldn't let me go anear 'er, nor she wouldn't let Jimmy neither, but she ain't far away, and she'd 'ave what I might call cawnfidence in you, Missie——" Cottingham had at length concluded: "Her's that sly we mightn't never see 'er again! But you take and go up that 'ill, Missie, that's where I seen 'er last, I'll lay you get 'er if anyone can!"

Christian, "still," as Rossetti says, "with the whole of pleasure," received these instructions reverently, and with the pockets of the kennel-coat further loaded with broken biscuit, "took and went" according to instructions. She climbed the fence behind the kennels, and addressed herself lightly to the ascent of the hill. It was a long hill, that began with pasture fields, that were merged imperceptibly into moorland, heather and furze. There were sheep, and donkeys and goats on it, and a melancholy old kennel-horse or two, all feeding peacefully. Amazon could not be accused in connection with them, so Christian reflected, and prepared herself to rebut any such slander. The rain was lighter, and the soaking mist that had all day filled the valley, was slowly thinning, and revealing the mighty scroll of silver that was the river, while the woods and hillsides came and went, illusive as the grey hints of landscape in a Japanese water-colour. But at the mature age of ten years, Christian cared for none of these things. She saw the smoke from the Mount Music kitchen chimney blending bluely with the mist, and thought with a momentary pang of the birthday cake. She wondered

if the Companions of Finn would so far forget honour and fidelity as to devour it without her. She thought of the ten candles that would gutter to their end, untended by the heroine of the celebration; she wondered if Cottingham would tell Papa, and if Papa would tell Mother (thus did this child of the 'eighties speak of her parents, the musical abbreviations of a later day, "Mum," and "Dad," not having penetrated the remoteness in which her home was placed); she also wondered if there would be a row about her getting wet. All these things seemed but too probable, but she was in for it now.

Near a ridge of the hill, in one of the shallow valleys that furrowed, like ploughshares, its long slant, there was a dolmen, three huge stones, with a fourth poised on it. Their grey brows rose over the billows of bracken, and briers, laden with the promise of fruit, made garlands for their ancient heads. Christian's straying advance brought her along the lip of the little valley in which they reposed, and quite suddenly there rose in her the conviction that her quest was nearing success. She was of that mysteriously-gifted company to whom the lairs of things lost are revealed. She "found things"; she was "lucky." She was regarded by the servants as one enfolded in the cloak of St. Anthony, that inestimable saint, whose mission it is to find and protect the lost. It had become a household habit to appeal to Christian when one of every day's most common losses occurred. She would hearken; her little thin body would stiffen, like a dog setting his game, a spark would light in her brown eyes, and—how led who can say?—she would fly like a wireless message to the thing sought for.

So it was now, on the furzy side of Cnocán an Ceoil Sidhe; she knew that the moment had come. She sat down on a ledge of rock, and waited, throbbing with anticipation, and had not long to wait. A brown shadow moved in the bracken near the dolmen, a brown face peered with infinite caution, round a flank of the great stones.

"Yoop! the little bitchie!" said Christian to the horizon.

Christian was an apt scholar, and Cottingham's tone and idiom were alike accurately rendered.

The lady thus addressed gazed with a greater intensity, but did not move. Christian took a piece of dog-biscuit from the ragged pocket of the kennel-coat, and, still walking closely in Cottingham's steps, bit it, ate a part of it, and carelessly flung the remainder in the direction of the shadow. This stole forth, and, having snapped up the biscuit, sank back into the covert. Christian did not move.

"Amazon!" she crooned, in tones in which a doting wood-pigeon might apostrophise a sickly fledgling; "Amazon, my darling!"

Another piece of biscuit accompanied the apostrophe, and poor Amazon, who was indeed very lonely and very hungry, capitulated, and came sidling up to the charmer, with propitiatory smiles, and deprecating stern wagging, beneath her, and in advance of her hind legs, instead of above her and behind them.

"'Olding the buckle in the right 'and," said Christian to herself, in faithful quotation from the great ensample, as with a swiftness and decision that were creditable to her training, she put the couples on Amazon.

Then she produced the bone that had been "Dixie's" bright achievement, and it was while, in contentment and friendship, Amazon was crunching it, that Larry Coppinger appeared.

He rose from behind a spur of rock and furze, and came towards Christian.

"Oh, good for you!" he said, admiringly, "I was afraid to show up till you had got her."

Christian was not sure that she was pleased at this intervention.

"How did you know where I was?"

"The servants told me you had gone to the kennels, and Jimmy showed me the hill, and then I spotted your white coat—not that it's so awfully white!—I thought it was rather rotten to let you go alone."

"And why not, pray?" enquired Christian, haughtily. Male assumption of the duties of guardianship was a thing she found highly offensive; "I always go about alone!"

"Well, I wanted to come, anyway," said Larry, with a placating grin. "I say, that *is* an awful nice dog!"

"You never call foxhounds '*dogs*'!" said Christian, still with hauteur; "Larry, you *are* an owl!"

But she enjoyed the consciousness of knowing more than he did; she even forgave him his superfluousness. She thought it was rather decent of him to have come, and she let him lead Amazon for a part of the way, only reserving to herself the entry into the presence of Cottingham, bringing her sheaf with her.

CHAPTER VI

Are childhood and youth indeed Vanity? When Christian looks back upon her childhood at Mount Music, it seems to her that the World, and Life, and Time, could hardly have bettered it for her, however they might have put their heads together over the job.

All her memories are steeped in sunlight. It was all fun and fights, and strawberries and dogs, and donkey-riding, and hot evenings on the big river, with the hum of flies in her ears, and Larry, hailing her from the farther bank of the Ownashee, across the stepping-stones. And whenever she thought about the schoolroom, it was always warm and rather jolly, especially in the Christmas holidays. They used to have drawing competitions, of which Larry was, of course, the promoter, in the old schoolroom, during the long winter evenings. Larry always had a pencil in his hand, and was renowned as an artist of horses and hounds, and Finn's wolf-dog, Bran, besides wielding a biting pen as a caricaturist. Christian could only compete in architectural designs that demanded neatness and exactness, but Georgy, the elder twin, had some skill in marine subjects, and, since he was going to the "Britannia," arrogated to himself the position of being an authority on shipping; so much so, indeed, that general satisfaction was felt when he was, one evening, worsted by Christian. The subject selected for competition was "A Haunted Ship."

"Where shall I put the ghost?" Georgy debated, chewing the end of his pencil, with his head on one side.

"In the shrouds, of course!" said Christian.

"Funny dog!" sneered Georgy, who considered that his artistic efforts were no fit subject for jesting. "You'd better come and shove in one of your Midianites for me!"

Then Christian, with the disconcerting swiftness of action, mental and physical, that was peculiarly hers, snatched, in a flash, the mug of painted-water from Larry's elbow, and poured its contents over Georgy's fair bullet-head; with which, and with a triumphing cry (learnt from a County Cork kitchenmaid, and very fashionable in the schoolroom) of "A-haadie!" she fled, "lighter-footed than the fox," and equally subtle and daring.

Christian was not easily roused to wrath, but when this occurred, youngest of the party though she was, it was but rarely that victory did not rest with her. Two subjects were marked dangerous among these children, during the combative years of "growing-up," and were therefore specially popular; of these, the one was Christian's reputed occult power, coupled with gibes based on that hymn to which reference has been made; the other was Larry's religion.

To the Talbot-Lowry children, their own religion was largely a matter of fetishes, with fluctuating restrictions as to what might or might not be done on Sundays, but they found Larry's a more stimulating subject. It was impossible for them to refrain from speculations as to what Larry said when he went to confession; equally impossible not to propose to the prospective penitent an assortment of sins to be avowed at his next shriving, even though the suggestions seldom failed to provoke conflict of the intensity usually associated with religious warfare.

Lady Isabel, confronted with these problems, fell back on the manuals of her own youth, with their artless pronouncements on the Righteous, the Wicked, their qualifications, their prospects; and, since the manuals had an indisputable *flair* for the subjects most likely to seize the attention of the young, Lady Isabel was generally able to divert her offspring's attention from the Errors of Rome, with digested narratives of "Adamaneve" (pronounced as one word) and the Serpent, Balaam's Ass, Jonah's Whale, and similar non-controversial matters.

"Wiser people than you and me, darlings," she would say,

with a slight stagger in grammar, but none in orthodoxy, "have explained it all for us——"

"Larry's papa and mamma didn't quite think the same as we do, but we needn't think about that, my pet!"

"But, mother, Evans says that the Pope——" appalling prognostications as to the future of that dignitary would probably follow.

Unfortunate Lady Isabel! But parents and guardians have, at least, the power of the closure.

"We needn't talk about it now," says the hard-pressed mother, "when you're grown up you will understand it all better——"

With Christian, however, this formula was less efficacious than with her elder brothers and sister. Her questioning, analysing, unwearying brain ignored the closure, and evaded poor Lady Isabel's evasions. Her religious life had been singularly vivacious, and the scope and variety of the petitions that she nightly offered caused considerable embarrassment to her mother. What was any good Church of England, or Ireland, mamma to do when an infant of four years implores its Deity:

"Make me to have a good, fat, lively conscience, and even if God curses me, help me not to mind a bit!"

The scandalised mamma decided that extempore prayer must be discouraged, and seeking out in one of the manuals a form of prayer of strictly limited range, repressed all additions and emendations.

Obedient to the traditions of her own youth, Lady Isabel, as her children successively attained the mature age of six years, bestowed Bibles upon them, but it was Christian, alone of the family, that applied herself with any diligence to the study of the Scriptures. She began with the Book of Esther (in which she found a satisfaction that in after life remained something of a bewilderment to her), and thence, but this was a year or two later, for no reason that can be assigned, she passed lightly to the Book of Revelation. With it, it may be said, the artistic side of her, that had leaped to

sympathy with Larry's emotion over "Dark Rosaleen" and "The Spirit of the Nation," awakened, and her artistic life began. That glittering, prismatic chapter, that tells of the rainbow round about the Throne, in sight like unto an emerald, and the Sea of glass, like unto crystal, that was before the Throne, and the thunderings and the voices, and the Voice as it were a trumpet talking. Christian read the chapter over and over again, for the sheer glory of the beautiful words. She, also, knew of Voices, and Music, that other people did not seem to hear. She could understand, and could tremble to those strange shouts, and trumpet-blasts, and thunderings.

The Pale Horse that happened after the Fourth Seal was broken!

She would sit as still as if she were frozen, while she thought of the Pale Horse coming crashing through Dharrig Wood, with Death on his back, and Hell following with him—she always thought of him in that black wood of pine trees——

"Wake up, Christian!" Miss Weyman, the governess, would say.

One of the Twins would hiss between his teeth: "Christian, dost thou see them?"

Christian would feel a spiritual bump, as though she had been flung off her chair on to the schoolroom floor, and Miss Weyman (always enviously spoken of by adjacent mammas as "that most sensible little Englishwoman") would say:

"I wonder how much you heard of what I was reading! I wish I could see you learning to have a little more concentration!"

Whereas, did the excellent Miss Weyman only know it, a very little more concentration on Christian's part, and it is possible that she, and Judith, and the Twins, might all have seen the Pale Horse thundering past the schoolroom windows. Stranger things have happened. The Indian rope and basket trick, for instance.

"A most curious child—a perfect passion for animals,

and so *dreamy,* if you know what I mean," Miss Weyman would say to a comrade visitor. "And the things that she seems to have learnt from the huntsman! But really a nice little thing, and clever, too, though a *most* erratic worker! Now, Judith——" Miss Weyman felt there was some satisfaction in teaching Judith. *She* could concentrate, if the comrade visitor liked! Nothing was a difficulty to her! And her memory! And her energy—Miss Weyman freely admitted that Judith was three years older than Christian, but still——

In short, Judith was a credit to any sensible little Englishwoman, but Christian had a way of knowing nothing (as touching arithmetic, for example), or too much (as touching Shakespeare and the Book of Revelation), that implied considerable independence as to the instructions of Miss Weyman, and no sensible little Englishwoman could be expected to enjoy that.

CHAPTER VII

It is not peculiar to Irish incomes to fail to develop in response to increasing demands upon them. It was, however, a distinctive feature of the incomes of those who were Irish landlords during the latter years of the Victorian era, to shrink in steady response to the difficulties of English government in Ireland. Only Irish people can understand the complicated processes of erosion to which Dick Talbot-Lowry's resources were subjected, or can realise the tests of fortitude and endurance to a man of spirit, that were involved by the visitations of "Commissioners," with their fore-ordained mission of lowering Dick's rents, rents that, in Dick's opinion, were already philanthropically low. Major Talbot-Lowry, like many of his tribe, though a pessimist in politics, was an optimist in most other matters, and found it impossible to conceive a state of affairs when he would be unable to do—approximately—whatever he had a mind for. At the age of fifty-eight, fortitude and endurance are something of a difficulty for a gentleman unused to the exercise of either of these fine qualities, and after keeping the Broadwater Vale Hounds, for seventeen years, as hounds should be kept, regardless of the caprices of the subscription list, Major-Talbot-Lowry felt that he had deserved better of his country than that he should now have to institute minor economies, such as putting his men into brown breeches, foregoing the yearly renewal of their scarlet coats, and other like humiliations. Farther than details such as these, his sense of right and wrong did not permit him to go.

"There are some things that they can't expect a gentle-

man to do," he would say to his cousin, Miss Coppinger, "and as long as I keep the hounds——"

"Then, my dear Dick, if you can't afford them, why keep them?" Frederica would rejoin, with unsparing common-sense.

Unmarried ladies of mature age, have, as a rule, learned not only fortitude and endurance, but have also mastered the fact that ways are governed by means. Those processes of erosion, however, to which reference has been made, were, comparatively speaking, slow in operation, and there remained always Lady Isabel's twenty thousand golden sovereigns, as safe and secluded in the hands of trustees (who had a constitutional disbelief in Irishmen), as if they were twenty thousand nuns under the rule of a royal abbess.

Therefore did Major Talbot-Lowry, M.F.H., and the Broadwater Vale Hounds, make a creditable show, brown breeches and last season's pink coats notwithstanding, at the meet at Coppinger's Court, on December 26th of the year 1897. The weather was grey and silver, with a light south-east wind and a rising glass. Sunshine was filtering down, as it were through muslin curtains that might at any moment be withdrawn; some crocuses and snowdrops had appeared in the grass round the wide gravel sweep in front of the house; there was a perplexed primrose or two, deceived by the sun as to the date; the scent of the violets in the bed under the drawing-room windows, came in delicate whiffs round the corner of the house. It would have been impossible to believe that but twenty-four hours ago, Christmas hymns had been shouted, and Christmas presents presented, had not a group of "Wran-boys" offered irrefutable testimony that this was indeed the Feast of Stephen. These, a ragged and tawdry little cluster of mummers, shabby survivors of mediæval mysteries, were gathered round their ensign holly-bush in front of the hall-door steps. From the holly-bush swung the corpse of the wren, and from the throats of the Wran-Boys came the song that recounts the wicked wren's pursuit and slaughter:

"The Wran, the Wran, the King of all birds,
On Stephenses' Day was cot in the furze,
And though he is little, his family is great,
Rise up, good gentlemen, and give us a thrate—Huzzay!"

Wherever in South Munster two or three boys were gathered together, that song was being sung, and Major Talbot-Lowry and his staff had already met so many of such companies on their way to the Meet, that their horses' indignation at finding a further collection of nightmares at Coppinger's Court was excusable.

On the high flight of hall-door steps, stood Larry and Miss Coppinger, the former pale with excitement, the latter doggedly resigned to the convention that compelled her to offer intoxicating drinks to people who, as she said, had but just swallowed their breakfasts. Larry had learned many things since that day of abysmal ignorance when he had spoken of Amazon as a "nice dog." Among his many enthusiasms he now included a passion for the chase, and all that appertains to its elaborate cult, that complied with Christian's, and even Cottingham's, sense of what was becoming, and, having dedicated a shelf in the library to books on hunting, he had read them all, with the same ardour that, four years earlier, he had brought to bear on The Spirit of the Nation and Irish history.

Major Talbot-Lowry looked down, from the top of his tall, white-faced chestnut, on his young cousin, and accepted the glass of port that Larry reverently offered to him, with a pleased appreciation of the reverence. Cousin Dick was not invariably pleased with his young cousin. He had gathered, hazily, from his wife, such of the tenets of the Companions of Finn as she, instructed by Miss Weyman, had been able to impart, and had not approved of them, nor of Larry's part in introducing them to his young; also it was annoying (especially when he remembered the brown breeches, etc.) to think of a young cub of a boy having more money than he knew what to do with; and, finally, and all the time,

there was that almost unconscious, inbred distrust of Larry's religion.

Nevertheless, it has been said that "wise men live in the present, for its bounties suffice them," and Dick, if not very wise, was very good-natured, and was wise enough to realise that the fine weather, and the good horse under him, and even Larry's homage, were bounties sufficient unto the day.

"Got a fox for me, Larry? That's right. Good boy. Where d'ye think we'll find him?"

"He's using the Quarry Wood earth, Cousin Dick," said Larry, breathlessly, with the anxiety of the owner of the coverts alight in his eyes. "I'm certain he's there. I went round with Sullivan myself last night, and we stopped the whole place. I bet he'll not get in anywhere!"

"Good! I'll draw the Quarry Wood first," said Cousin Dick, with royal benignity. "You get away outside at the western end, and keep a look-out for him."

A heavy man, on an enormous grey horse, had approached the Master, having edged his way through the hounds with ostentatious care. He was of a type sufficiently common among southern Irishmen, with thick, strong-growing, black hair, a large, black moustache, and heavy brows, over-shadowing eyes of precisely the same shade of blunted blue as his shaven chin.

"He's a credit to his breeding, Major!" said the heavy man, indicating Larry with a sandwich from which he had taken a bite of the size of one of his horse's hoofs; "I wish we had a few more lads coming on in the country like him!"

"What good are they going to do?" responded the Master, reverting to the pessimistic mood that was daily becoming more frequent with him; "what chance is there for a gentleman in this damned country? You might as well have a mill-stone round your neck as an Irish property these times! What do you suppose will be left to us after the next 'Revision of Rents,' as they call it?"

"Well, deuce a much indeed," returned Doctor Mangan, equably, "but it mightn't be so bad as that altogether! I

have my little girl out for the first time to-day, Major. I wonder might I ask your man, that's looking after your young ladies, to have an eye to her, too?"

Doctor Mangan withdrew with the required permission, and with his daughter at his heels, proceeded through the assembling riders and carriages, distributing greetings as he went.

Doctor Francis Aloysius Mangan was one of the leading doctors in the district of which the towns of Cluhir and Riverstown each felt itself to fill the most important place. Ireland grows doctors and clergymen with almost equal success and profusion. There is in the national character a considerable share of the constituents that are valuable in both professions. Power of sympathy, good-nature, intuition, adroitness, discernment of character, and a gift for taking every man in his humour. Qualities that are perhaps beside the specialised requirements, but are equally indispensable.

In what degree these attributes were bestowed upon Doctor Mangan may gradually be ascertained by the patient reader, but in the case of Father David Hogan, P.P., of Riverstown, at this juncture in lively converse with the Misses Talbot-Lowry, the reader may be spared the exercise of that tiresome virtue, and may feel confident that Father Hogan failed in none of the qualities that have been enumerated. Father David was, indeed, the most popular man in the country with all classes and creeds; he was universally known as the Chaplain of the B.V.H., and was accounted one of the chiefest glories of the hunt. Major Talbot-Lowry was accustomed to boast, in places where such as he congregate, that He, in His country, had the best priest in Ireland! A real good man. Kept the farmers civil and friendly. Managed a district for the Fowl Fund. And a topper to ride—always at the top of the hunt!

"Trust a priest to have a good horse!" is the rejoinder prescribed in such cases, and Major Dick's fellows seldom failed to comply with the ritual.

Father David, stout, jolly, and, like his namesake, of a

ruddy countenance, mounted upon a black mare as stout and sporting-looking as himself, was, as Doctor Mangan drew near to the Misses Talbot-Lowry, beaming upon these two lambs from another fold, and having congratulated Miss Judith on the appearance of the grey mare that she was riding (reft from Lady Isabel and the victoria), was endearing himself to Miss Christian by tales of the brace of hound puppies that he was walking for the hunt.

The advantage of being the youngest member of a large family is one that takes a considerable time to mature. Christian was thirteen years old before what was left of one of the Hunt horses, after seven strenuous seasons of official work, was placed at her sole disposal. This residue, battered though it was, and a roarer of remarkable power and volume, was incapable of falling, and with anything under eight stone on its piebald back (piebald from incessant and sedulously concealed saddle-galls) could always be trusted to keep within reasonable distance of hounds when they ran. It was fortunate for Christian that Judith, now sixteen, and far from a feather-weight, had renounced her share in "Harry," and had established a right in the grey mare. Judith was a buccaneer. Charles, the coachman, (in connection with the commandeering of the grey mare, which he resented) had said of her to his respected friend, Mr. Evans: "Ah, ah! That's the young lady that'll get her whack out of the world!"

And Mr. Evans' reaping-hook nose had sniffed assent.

Yet, though Judith was averted, the Christmas holidays always held the menace of brothers to be reckoned with as rival claimants for Harry.

"The boys, darling!" "Unselfishness, darling!" "After the holidays, my child!"

Lady Isabel was of the school that inculcated self-denial for its daughters, but never for its sons; (whether from a belief that such was inherent in the male sex, or from a fear that the effort would be misplaced, it is difficult to say). Christian was ever quick to respond to the call for martyr-

dom, but that the Twins should both maltreat and despise the venerable Harry, added a poignancy to renunciation that placed it almost beyond attainment. On this day of festival, happily, renunciation was not exacted; other attractions had absorbed the Twins, and Christian's rights were unchallenged.

Therefore, it was that the youngest Miss Talbot-Lowry, perched on old Harry's broad back, and looking of about the same size in relation to it as the "Wran" to the holly-bush, was now blissfully discussing hound-puppies with her trusted friend, Father David, and was asking nothing more that life could offer.

Dr. Mangan, meantime, waited, with a permissive smile, for the moment to make his "little girl" known to the young ladies from Mount Music, and to their cousin, young Larry Coppinger. He was in no hurry, and he had often had occasion to agree with Milton (though he had been quite unaware of so doing) in thinking that they also serve who only stand and wait.

CHAPTER VIII

It may be permissible to introduce a meet of hounds at or about the end of a chapter, but I feel sure that the ensuing run must be given elbow-room. Alarming to many though this statement may be, yet it may be said that its foundations are laid in truth and equity, and in the necessities of this history may be found the justification of the chapter.

The Quarry Wood had not failed. Larry's fox had been in it. To Larry, seated on his stout, bay cob, with a heart banging against his ribs, and a soul absorbed into a single supplication, had come, suddenly and beautifully, the answer to prayer, the ineffable spectacle of a large and lovely fox, sliding quietly away, at the right place, at the right moment. Life could offer Larry no more; not then, at all events.

"*My* coverts—*my* fox!"

Not many boys of sixteen, enthusiasts, endowed with just that touch of the poetic temperament that can set the brain reeling, could know a more wondrous moment.

Then to see Cousin Dick, blazing and splendid, charging out of the wood, "like the man on the red horse in Revelation," as Christian said afterwards—(Christian had sneaked away from Charles, the coachman, and had followed Larry) —with the hounds flashing around and ahead of him, and Cottingham's rasping "Forrad! Forrad!" from the wood behind, like the blast of a bellows upon flames!

Larry had been past speech when that apocalyptic vision had materialised in response to his halloa. He had waved his hat and cheered the hounds to the line of the fox, but it had been unnecessary; they had not had an instant's uncer-

tainty, and had taken hold on their own account without reference to anyone.

That the hold taken by the hounds was a firm and assured one was due, not only to their own virtues, but also to the fact that where the fox had broken, a tract of turf bog met the wood, and carried a scent of entire efficiency. What, however, it was incapable of carrying were the horses. The hounds, uttering their ecstasy in that gorgeous chorus of harmonious discordance called Full Cry, sped across the bog like a flock of seagulls; but for the riders, a narrow track between deep ditches left by the turf-cutters for their carts, was the sole hope, and a string of horses, galloping in single file, was soon following hard on the heels of the Master. Foremost of them all were Christian and Larry, filled with an elation beyond the power of words to convey. The hounds were holding steadily right-handed across the bog, and were ever widening the distance between them and the riders, but it was enough for these two children to be able to keep their proud place, next after the Master, and to know that no one, not even Cottingham, could deprive them of it. It may gravely be questioned if Tommy, the stout bay cob, and Harry, the residue of a hunt horse, appreciated a position to which they were so little accustomed. Harry, whose heart, indisputably in the right place, was possibly the only sound item in his outfit, pounded gallantly on, roaring as he went, like a lion seeking after his prey; but Tommy, whose labours were, as a rule, limited to mild harness-work, was kept going mainly by stress of circumstances, in which category Larry's spurs took a prominent part. The bog-track at length became merged in a rushy field, and then indeed did the pent waters of the hunt break forth. Major Dick's tall chestnut had gradually increased his lead, and by the time the track was clear of riders, he was two fields ahead, with Cottingham not far behind, and a few indignant young men riding like maniacs to overtake them. To have been held back by a schoolboy and a little girl is an indignity not easily to be borne. The Broadwater Vale field was a hard-going one,

including a strengthening of young soldiers from the regiment quartered at Riverstown, and it was not long before Tommy and Harry were beginning to find themselves in a more familiar and less exigent position. Judith, on the grey mare, went by them like a flash; Doctor Mangan overtook them heavily, and heavily passed them. Father David, riding a little wide of the crowd, waved a friendly hand to Christian, as the black mare, composed and discreet, as became a daughter of the Church, dwelt for an instant on the top of a wide bank, before she struck off into the next field. Worst indignity of all, Charles, the coachman, on the elderly carriage horse, drew alongside, and presumed to offer directions and admonitions. "As if," thought Christian, as she drove Harry at the bank in the wake of the black mare, "I cared a pin what he says!"

Gone for poor Charles were the days when Miss Christian had revered him above all other created things; days such as the one on which, after a ride round the yard on an unharnessed carriage horse, Christian, in gratitude too great for words, had attempted to kiss him. Charles had repelled the embrace, saying tactfully: "No pleasures in Lent, Miss!" and Christian had accepted the excuse. Then Miss Christian had been three years old, now she was thirteen, and Charles had, in the interval, married a cook, and lost his figure, and with it, had departed his nerve, and the reverance of Miss Christian, and he knew it.

Close behind Charles came Dr. Mangan's "little girl," who had been confided with a lubricating half-crown, to his care. Miss Letitia Mangan was far from considering herself a little girl. She was sixteen and a half, and conceived herself to be of combatant rank, even though her thick, dark hair banged on her back in a ponderous pigtail, and her education at the Cluhir Convent School was still uncompleted. The fat, piebald pony that she was riding would have a sore back before she got home. Christian, perched wren-like on her ancient steed (but a wren placed with mathematical accuracy of directness with relation to the

steed's ears), noted with disfavour the crooked seat, the heavy hand on the curb. Larry, hot and pink, with hat hanging by its guard, his fair hair looking like storm-tossed corn-stooks, noted nothing, being wholly engrossed in bitter conflict with Tommy. The art of keeping a good start with hounds is not given to many, and least of all to the young and inexperienced. From having been first of the first, it had fallen to Larry and Christian to find themselves last, and last in the despised company of Charles and "the Mangan girl."

The unexacting position of being at the heel of the hunt may have a charm for the philosophic or unambitious, but so black a continuation of so great a start was a trial quite beyond the endurance of a young gentleman possessed of the artistic temperament. And then the abominable Mangan girl came into play, and joined in the circling performance at the big bank. Always, when Larry felt that this time the cob was going to "have it," that cow-like red and white beast would jam itself in the way, so he thought, raging. In this matter of hunting, Dr. Mangan had not been well advised in his scheme for his little girl's social advantage.

In the meantime the hounds had run their fox into Drumkeen Wood, and the riders, arriving in small and breathless companies, thanked God for a check, and tightened their girths and took courage. The latter would undoubtedly be needed if the run continued; Drumkeen Wood was hung like a cloak upon the side of a steep hill, and was the invariable prelude to the worst going within the bounds of the hunt.

"If he's into the big earth here, I'm afraid it's good-bye to him!" said Dr. Mangan, taking courage in a liquid form. "It was a sweet gallop while it lasted! Sweet and short, like this toothful of cherry brandy I'm after drinking!"

"Ah, that's poor stuff, Doctor," said Mr. Hallinan, proprietor of Hallinan's Hotel, a prosperous hostelry, much patronised by salmon-fishers. "Give me a sup of good old John Jameson in its purity!"

" 'Twas for Tishy I brought this out," replied the Doctor, apologetically; "but I lost sight of her. She's back somewhere with little Christian Lowry and young Coppinger."

"What sort of a lad is that?" asked Mr. Hallinan. "Is he as big a pup as them young Lowrys?"

"Ah, they're not so bad altogether," said Dr. Mangan, indulgently. "Young sprigs like them are none the worse for a little *tashpy,* as the people say!" The Doctor's heavy voice relaxed a little over the world *tashpy* (which, it should perhaps be explained, is Irish, and implies a blend of impudence and high spirits). He was quite aware that his friend Hallinan and he regarded the Talbot-Lowrys from a different standpoint.

"I was having a bit of lunch there the other day," he went on, "and I thought they were nice boys enough."

"I hope you got enough to eat!" said Mr. Hallinan, disagreeably; "I'm told that their butcher's sick and tired trying to get what he's owed, out of them! There should be drink enough, anyway! I'm just after sending in a case of whisky there. God knows when I'll be ped for it!"

At this moment the two gentlemen, whose horses were nibbling the grass of the bank that surrounded the wood, were shaken by the sudden appearance of the white nose of the Master's chestnut on the other side of the bank.

"I'd be obliged if there was less noise!" said the Master's voice, with threatening in it.

Mr. Hallinan's jaw dropped unaffectedly.

"Merciful God!" he murmured; "did he hear me, d'ye think?"

"Ah, no fear, man!" whispered the Doctor, encouragingly. "And if he did itself, maybe you'd get your cheque a bit quicker!"

In the silence that followed, a whimpering whistle from a hound, invisible, yet near at hand, sent a thrill through the waiting riders. There followed the rustling rush of hounds through the undergrowth, as they gathered to enquire into

the whimper. Then another whimper, merging into a squeal, and Cottingham's voice:

"Hark to Dulcet! Forrad to Dulcet!"

"Begad, they have him again," said Dr. Mangan, without enthusiasm. "I wonder where is Tishy gone to? I suppose they'll run these blasted hills now——"

The big grey horse, and his seventeen stone rider, moved off in the opposite direction to the tread of the hunt, which was slowly and steadily pushing upwards through the wood. Dr. Mangan was one of the select company of followers of hounds who know when they have had enough.

A narrow, stony passage, more resembling a drain than a lane, ran round the wood; the riders hustled along it, like a train in a cutting, too tightly packed for the most vindictive kicker to injure his neighbour, too hampered by impeding rocks to make more speed than can be accomplished by a jog. The drain ended at a V-shaped fissure between two slants of rock, and, by the time the last horse had clattered and scrambled up it, the hounds were away again, steering up, across heathery fields, enclosed by fences and stone walls of all sorts and sizes, for a great double-headed hill on the sky-line, three or more miles away.

"Carrigaholt as usual!" said Major Dick, over his shoulder, to the Hon. Sec., young Kirby of Castle Ire. "If you get a chance, try and head him off the western rocks—and Bill! Tell those infernal children of mine they're to keep with Charles and look out for bogs!"

His conscience as a parent thus appeased, the Master applied himself to the no small task of keeping his hounds in sight, and of evading the equal difficulties presented by rocks and bog holes. The offspring in question were now, with Larry, in comparative and undesired safety beneath the fluttering wing of Charles, and Bill Kirby, having faithfully delivered his message, found himself immediately adopted as an alternative protector, and repented him of his fidelity.

The hounds stormed on through the hills, running hard across the frequent boggy tracts, more slowly, and with

searchings, over the intervening humps of rock and furze. The fox was making a well-known point, and running a well-known line, but the fences in their infinite variety, defied the staling force of custom, and the difficulties of the going were intensified by the pace. The hounds gained at length the ridge of the high country, and as they flitted along the sky-line, the riders, labouring among the rocks, skirting the bogs, pounding at the best pace they could raise over the intervals of heather and grass, felt that their hold on the hunt had become distinctly insecure.

"'Christian dost thou see them?'" quoted Larry, kicking his heels into the bay cob's well-covered ribs without effect, "for I don't!"

"They'll check at Carrigaholt," called back Bill Kirby; "that'll be our chance——"

They were far up on the slope of the hills now; the country swung in long, dipping lines, down to the Vale of the Broadwater, and spread, in great and generous curves, away to the far range of the Mweelin Mountains, that brooded, in colour a deep and sullen sapphire, on the horizon. The town of Cluhir, a little puff of smoke, cut in two by the wide river, lay below. The spires of the two churches rose above the smoke, one on either side of the bridge that spanned the river. The sound of bells, faintly rising from one of them, summoned the faithful to the mid-day Mass in honour of St. Stephen.

Larry, pushing Tommy along at a dogged canter, lifted his bowler hat as he heard the bells, and Christian and Judith looked at each other. The tradition of the Protestant, "No demonstrations!" with its singular suspicion and distrust of manifestations of reverence or poetry, had been early implanted in them, and Judith murmured to Christian: "How on earth does he remember?"

"I know I couldn't," admitted Christian; yet some feeling that, though crushed, had survived the heavy feet of Lady Isabel's trusted manuals, stirred in her in accord with the faint clash of the chapel bells, making her envy Larry

his accredited salutation, making her feel something of the beauty, if not of holiness, of, at least, the recognition that there were holy things in the world.

On the nearer head of Carrigaholt the check, predicted by Bill Kirby, came. A narrow and level plateau ran between the twin crests; above it on both sides, rose successive shelves of cliff, with swathes of russet bracken muffling their fierce outline. Flung about on the shelves, looking like tumbled piles of giant books in a neglected library, were immense rectangular rocks; one would say that only the grey and knotted cords of the ivy that had crept over them, held them in their place upon those rugged shelves. At one end of the level place the ground fell steeply to a wild stream, the Feorish, from whose farther bank another hill, but little less formidable than Carrigaholt, rose like an enemy tower, threatening its defences. The hounds swarmed like bees among the rocks, jumping or falling from shelf to shelf, burrowing and thrusting through the bracken, their heads appearing suddenly in quite improbable places, with glowing eyes and glistening pink tongues, demanding from their huntsman the information that no one but themselves could give.

It was a place in which not one, but a hundred places of safety presented themselves to a fox, but this good fox had despised them all, and, of all the hounds, it was Amazon, Christian's beloved foundling, who was first to recognise the fact. Far down, from the bottom of the gorge, she called to her fellows, and it was Christian, of all the riders, who first heard her voice. If Larry had had his great moment, when the fox broke, it was Christian's turn now, when Amazon fresh-found him. I suppose there are not very many people who, as well as being perfectly happy, are conscious of their perfect happiness. This little girl was of that privileged company, as, in answer to her call, her father threw the pack over the edge of the plateau and cheered them to Amazon.

In two minutes, a frenzied chorus was filling the narrow

gorge, the cry of the hounds, the hurrying reiterated notes of the horn, the shouts of the Whips rating on stragglers, echoeing and re-echoing from cliff to cliff. Before the riders had committed themselves to the descent, the leading hounds were straining up the opposite cliff face; slithering, and slipping, the horses were hurried down a track that goats had made between rocks and bracken, and, at the base, found themselves confronted with the problem of the river. The River Styx could hardly look less attractive than did the Feorish, as it swirled, swollen and foaming, among its rocks, its dark torrent plunging from steep to steep in roaring waterfalls. Some country men, high on the cliffs, howled directions, and the Master, his eye on his hounds struggling with the fierce stream, went on down the gorge until the howls changed their metre, thus indicating to the experienced that the moment had come to cross the river. The ford, such as it was, permitted some half dozen of the horses to cross it, splashing and floundering, wobbling perilously from the round and slimy back of one sunken rock to another.

Judith and the grey mare, following close on Bill Kirby's heels, got over neatly, and were away after him over the top of the hill before Christian's turn came. The ancient and skilled Harry addressed himself to the task with elderly caution, feeling his way with suspicion, creeping across with slow-poised feet, and was so delicate over the effort, that Larry's cob, following too close on him, was checked at a critical moment. He struggled, slipped, recovered, found himself still hindered by Harry, and, with a final stagger, lost footing altogether, and rolled over.

Cottingham, subsequently recounting the incident, declared that *he* thought, he did, that the young genel'm was done for; but "that little Miss Christeen—she's a nummer she is!—she off'n 'er 'oss before I fair sees what's 'appened, and she ketches the young chap by the 'ed, and pulls 'im clear! Her did indeed! A lill' gurl like what she is too! Her's wuth more than ten big men!"

What a singular encomium, "a nummer" might mean,

was a fact known only to Cottingham, but it was incontrovertibly Christian's eel-like swiftness of action that had saved Larry from a worse accident. Small and slender though she was, she was wiry, and she had the gift of being able instantly to concentrate every force of mind and body upon a desired point—a rare gift and a precious one.

But when she and Larry, dripping and hatless, were hauled into safety by other helpers, less swift but more powerful, it was found that Larry had not come out of the Feorish unscathed. His left hand was hanging, helpless, with a broken wrist.

CHAPTER IX

THE hunt swept on after the manner of hunts, full of sympathy, having, as to one man, contributed a silver cigarette case, with which another, a resourceful medical student, had improvised a splint, but feeling, not without relief, that they could do nothing more; feeling also, with depression, that the Lord only knew where the devils had run to by this time, but that that couldn't be helped; with which philosophic reflection and many valedictory shouts of commiseration, the last of them had vanished over the hill.

The unfortunate Charles restored to guardianship, now found himself with Miss Judith, lost; Miss Christian soaked to the skin, eight miles or more from her home; Master Larry ditto, in much pain, no nearer to his, and unable to mount his horse, which latter would have to be led over a succession of fences to the nearest road; (and no matter with what distinction an elderly coachman can drive a pair of horses on a road, it is very far from being the same thing to get a pair of horses across a country). It was, therefore, a very gloomy party that set face for the nearest highway. The intricacies of procedure at each jump need not here be dealt with, but it may be said that a more thankful man than Charles, when he again felt the good macadam under his feet, is not often met with. He would at that moment have said that he could not have felt an intenser gratitude than suffused him as he saw his convoy safe off the hills; but there he would have over-stated the case, since, scarcely five minutes after the road had been reached, an even more supreme thankfulness was his. Coming rapidly towards him, he beheld Dr. Mangan's outside car, and upon it was the large person of Dr. Mangan himself.

"Well," said Charles that evening, to Mr. Evans, "if it was the Angel Gabriel I seen flying down to me, I wouldn't be as glad as what I was when I seen the Big Doctor on the side-car!"

And Mr. Evans had caustically rejoined: "It'll be the funny day when you'll see wings on *him!*" meaning Dr. Mangan, of whom he had a low opinion.

Wings or no wings, no angel of mercy and succour was ever more welcome or more needed than was the Big Doctor at this moment. Larry, very white, shivering with pain and cold, was lifted on to the car; Christian was told to gallop away home as fast as she could, and Charles was directed to let Miss Coppinger know that her nephew would be put up for the night at the Doctor's own house at Cluhir.

"You can say to her that I met the Hunt, and one of them told me what happened," said the Big Doctor, "and I knew then what to do."

It might, indeed, habitually be said of Dr. Mangan that he knew very well what to do. There were, indeed, but two occasions on record when it might have seemed that he had not so known. The first of these was when he had abandoned an improving practice in Dublin to work as his father's partner in his native Cluhir, the second, when, preliminary to that return, he had married a lady, alleged, by inventive and disagreeable people, to have been his cook. The disagreable people had also said disagreeable things as to the nature of the stress that had prompted the marriage. But it was now twenty years since the Mangans had been established at Number Six, The Mall, Cluhir; the Doctor had come in for his father's money as well as his practice, and was respected as "a warm man"; the disagreeable ones had grown old, and people who are both old and disagreeable cannot expect to command a large audience. Mrs. Mangan, on the contrary, was neither the one nor the other, being, at this time, but little over forty, and as kindly, lazy, and handsome a creature as ever lived down spiteful gossip by

good-nature. When "The Dawkthor" (as she called him, with a drowsy drag on the first syllable) had galloped in at one o'clock to command Barty's room to be got ready at once, Mrs. Mangan was still in what she called "dishable," and was straying between her bedroom and the kitchen, pleasurably involved in the cares of both.

"They say young Coppinger fell in the river, and he's broken his wrist," said the Doctor rapidly, stamping into his wife's room, bringing the wind of the hills with him. "I'll bring him here as soon as I can get hold of him."

"The creature!" replied Mrs. Mangan, sympathetically.

"Well, don't be waiting to pity him now!" said her husband, stuffing bandages into his pocket, "but hurry and put hot jars into the bed—and clean sheets. Don't forget now, Annie!"

He lumbered in his long boots and spurs, down to the surgery, still issuing directions.

"Tishy'll be back directly—she'll give you a hand—and Annie! tell Hannah to have some hot soup ready. Now, hurry, for God's sake!"

The front door into the Mall, Cluhir's most fashionable quarter, banged.

"Well, well!" said Mrs. Mangan, still sympathetic, while she removed the curling-pins from her bison fringe; "wasn't it the will of God that I had a headache this morning and couldn't go to Mass! I'll have something to say to Father Greer now if he draws it up to me that I was backward in my duty!"

Much fortified by this reflection, Mrs. Mangan hurriedly proceeded with her toilette, squalling meanwhile to her hench-woman in the kitchen a summary of the Doctor's orders. She had no more than achieved what she called her "Sunday dress," a complimentary effort to be equally divided between Saint Stephen and young Mr. Coppinger, when the back-door into the yard from the house slammed, and her daughter's voice announced her return.

"Come up, Tishy, till I talk to you!" shouted Mrs. Man-

gan, slinging a long gold watch-chain over her head and festooning it upon her ample bosom: "Did you meet Pappy?" she continued, as her daughter's steps drew near.

"I did to be sure," returned Miss Letitia, coming into her mother's room and flinging herself into an armchair, "when I was crossing the bridge it was. He roared to me to hurry you and Hannah. Holy Mary Joseph! How stiff I am! That old horn on the saddle has the right leg cut off me!"

"Well, never mind your legs now," replied Mrs. Mangan, peremptorily, "what I want to know is what sort is this young man that Pappy's bringing in on top of us? In God's name, why couldn't he be let go home to his own?"

"'Young man' is it!" retorted Tishy; "he's nothing but a boy at school, and a cross boy too! Such beating of his pony as he had when he wouldn't jump for him! Didn't I try and make poor Zoé go before him, and th' eye he cast at her! I thought he'd beat me, too!"

"Oh, and is a boy all he is then?" said Mrs. Mangan, with relief in her voice: "you'd think by the work your father had 'twas the Lord Leftenant was in it! Run away now, Tishy, like a good girl, and get those clothes off you, and help Hannah with Barty's room. Boy or man or whatever he is, he must have a bed under him!"

It was a very deplorable boy who presently arrived at No. 6, The Mall, Cluhir, and was practically lifted off the car by the Big Doctor. Francis Aloysius Mangan had many aspects of character of an undesirable kind, but they were linked with one virtue, the Irish gift, of a good-natured heart. With his enormous thick hands, that made Larry think of a tiger's paws, he undressed the boy as cleverly and gently as he had set the broken bones of his wrist. Mrs. Mangan and Hannah had not failed; the soup and the jars were, as the latter authority had pronounced, "as hot as love," similarly passioned was the ardour of the whisky-punch, with which the proceedings had opened. Combined with a subsequent sleeping-draught, it conferred the boon of sleep, and for some hours, at all events, Larry forgot his recently-

acquired knowledge of what pain was. But not for many hours. In the long darkness of the winter morning he lay with a fast mounting temperature, while he made the discovery, common to all in his case, that upon the particular bone that has been broken, the entire existence pivots. And, in addition to the broken bone, by the time that Miss Frederica had driven in from Coppinger's Court, there was but little doubt that what Dr. Mangan called, lightly, "a touch of pneumonia," would keep young Mr. Coppinger in Barty's room for a time unspecified.

Miss Frederica drove home again in a seriously perturbed frame of mind, and with indignation against the decrees of Providence hot within her.

"I wired for a nurse for him!" she said to Lady Isabel, "I could not plant myself upon them! It's all *most* uncomfortable and unavoidable. Of course they've been extremely kind——"

At the back of Miss Coppinger's mind was the wish, that she trampled on whenever it stirred, that the Mangans had been less unexceptionally kind and Good Samaritan-like. "Such an obligation!" she groaned; "they've turned their own son out of the house to make room for Larry! But oh, my dear Isabel, if you could imagine what the house is like! The untidiness! The dirt! Of course they're unspeakably kind, and Dr. Mangan is certainly very clever, and has managed Larry wonderfully," went on Frederica, repenting her of her evil speaking, "and I must say I can't help liking Mrs. Mangan, but the girl——!" Miss Coppinger shut her mouth so tightly that her lips became thin, white lines. "Keep the door of your lips" was a text which she had in her youth illuminated for herself. She often found that nothing save a sudden and violent slam would keep that door shut, and, to do her justice, the slams, when the conversation turned on the Mangan household, were both frequent and violent.

This was later, when Larry was getting better, and when his aunt had begun to find the daily drive to Cluhir something

of a strain. It was not until he was practically convalescent that he was permitted to receive other visitors. Even the daughter of the house, and that unknown son, into whose bedroom he had been thrust, were, for him, beneath the surface, and their presence only inferential. Barty was domiciled at a friend's, and Miss Tishy held aloof, the hushed voices, and general restraint imposed by illness, being not at all to her taste. Lady Isabel came once, with his aunt, and Christian crept shyly in behind them. Christian was wont to be silent in the presence of her elders. That great and admirable maxim, once widely instilled into the young, whose purport is that children should seldom be seen and never heard, had early been accepted by Christian, without resentment, even, as she grew older, with gratitude. Having diffidently taken Larry's listless and pallid paw, she had slipped into the background, and waited silently, while her eager brain absorbed and stored every detail for future meditation. Long after Larry had lightly forgotten all save the large facts of his illness and incarceration, Christian could describe the Pope, whose highly-coloured presentment beatified (rather than beautified) the wall over Larry's bed, and could imitate, with the accuracy of a phonograph, the voice of Mrs. Mangan, as she issued her opinions on the state of the weather to her distinguished visitors.

CHAPTER X

THE "touch of pneumonia," prophesied by Dr. Mangan, had proved to be a sufficiently emphatic one. Larry's recovery was slow, and during his languid convalescence, he found himself becoming sincerely attached to the Big Doctor and Mrs. Mangan, and their high place in his affections was shared by the nurse provided by Miss Coppinger. The bond of a common faith was one that, at this stage of his development, had but little appeal to Larry, but he was, at all events, spared any possibility of suffering from the feelings of sub-friction, if not of antagonism, that inevitably stirred in his aunt's breast, if she found herself brought into relation closer than that of employer and employed with those of the older creed.

His sense of beauty, now beginning to acquire consciousness, and sorely afflicted by the decorative scheme that had been adopted in Barty's bedroom, found solace in the faces of these two women. Even the lazy consideration of the contrast between their types, was a comfort to Larry, and distracted his mind from the wall-paper (which suggested the contents of Dr. Mangan's surgery, rhubarb, and mustard-leaves predominating), and from Barty's taste in art, which in its sacred and profane aspects was alike deplorable.

Nurse Brennan, slight and fair, with the clearest of blue eyes, and a Dresden china complexion—Larry was already artist enough to study and adore the shadow of her white coif, with its subtle, reflected lights, on her pink, rose-leaf cheek—and Mrs. Mangan, just a little over-blown, but heavily, darkly handsome, with deep-lidded shadowy eyes, and—as Master Coppinger pleased himself by discovering—

a slight suggestion of a luxurious Chesterfield sofa, upholstered in rich cream velvet. When he was getting better, and the rigours of the sick room were relaxing, these two provided him with interest and entertainment of which they were delightfully unaware.

"Well, and what will I give him for his dinner to-day, Norrse?"—(impossible to persuade the English alphabet to disclose Mrs. Mangan's pronunciation of this word)—his hostess would say, drifting largely into Larry's room, and seating herself on the side of his bed.

"Don't be making an invalid of him at all, Mrs. Mangan!" Nurse Brennan would rejoin briskly; "I'm just telling him I'd be sorry to get a thump from that old wrist of his, he and the Doctor think so much about! And he hasn't as much as a point of temperature those three days!"

"Oh, I say, Nurse!" Larry would protest, "then why won't you let me get up?"

"Be quite now"—(in Ireland the "e" in "quiet" is not infrequently thus transposed)—"and don't be bothering me, like a good child!" Nurse would reply, with a sidelong flash of her charming eyes, a recognition of Larry's age and sex that atoned for the opprobrious epithet.

"Would he like a bit of fish now? I'm going down the town, and I might meet one of the women in from Broadhaven." Thus Mrs. Mangan, coaxingly.

"Oh, Mrs. Mangan, please don't bother!" says Larry.

"Ah, no bother at all! Sure I was going down anyway to the chapel to get a sup of holy water. I declare the house is bone dry! Not a drop in it!"

After dreary winter mornings spent in reading, by the light of a misplaced window, or age-long afternoons, drowsed through in that torpor, mental as well as physical, that overwhelms the victim of a prolonged sojourn in bed, Larry used to find himself looking forward to the conversations between Nurse Brennan and Mrs. Mangan that arose at tea-time, and followed, stimulated by the early darkness of January, in the firelight; the southern voices rising and falling like the

flickering flames, becoming soon self-engrossed, and forgetful of the silent listener in the bed. Sometimes sleep would lap him in slow, stealthy peace, and the voices would die away, or come intermittently, as the sound of a band marching through a town fades and recurs at the end of a street. But without being aware of it, he was absorbing knowledge, learning a new point of view, breathing a new atmosphere that was to influence him more deeply than he could have any conception was possible.

One evening the talk fell on the congenial topic of illness, doctors and patients, nurses and nuns, all spinning in the many-coloured whirlpool of talk, now one and now another cresting the changing wave. The fact that Larry was of their own religion, counterbalanced his belonging to an alien class, and if their consciences sometimes hinted at a lack of discretion, they quieted them with the assurance that "the poor child was asleep!"

"Ah, the nuns are wonderful!" said Mrs. Mangan, languishingly. "Look how lovely they have the Workhouse Infirmary! I was taking some flowers to Reverend Mother, and she was telling me what a beautiful death old Catherine Macsweeny made. Reverend Mother rained tears when she told me."

Nurse Brennan sniffed.

"Reverend Mother's a sweet woman, and the nuns are very attentive when a person'd be dying, but indeed Mrs. Mangan, if you ask *me,* I'd say 'twas the only time they were much use to their patients! Up at that infirmary what have patients at night to look after them only an old inmate, and she 'wanting' maybe!"

Larry began to giggle, and was moved to try his wit.

"Nurse! What's the difference between a stale mate and an old inmate? And what does it want?"

"It wants the very same as yourself—brains!" returned Nurse, swiftly. "Now may be!" She wagged her head at him triumphantly, turning aside to hide the smile of victory, and Larry thought how lovely was her profile, as the fire-

light etched it in incandescent lines on the smoky background.

"Well, indeed, the Poor have a deal to put up with!" said Mrs. Mangan, lazily, leaning back in her basket-chair, with her big grey cat purring like an aeroplane engine on her knee. "The Doctor says no one but himself knows the way he's dragged all over the country, patching up after some of them young fellows that get dispensaries before they're fit to doctor the cat!"

The reformer, that underlay the artist in Larry, awoke.

"But, Mrs. Mangan," he said, hotly, sitting up in bed, and glaring into the gloom at Mrs. Mangan's half-seen face, "why do they give dispensaries to chaps that can't doctor a cat?"

"Because their fathers can spend four or five hundred pounds to buy votes!" returned Mrs. Mangan, laughing at him. "Is that news to you? Lie down child, and don't be looking at me like that! *I* haven't a vote to sell!"

Larry subsided with vague splutterings. Nurse came to his bedside and smoothed the clothes.

"Listen to me now," she said impressively, "and *I'll* tell you something to make you angry, if you like!"

She leaned against the foot of the bed, with her hands in the pockets of her apron, looking down at him. "I was in charge of th' infirmary at Mellifont one time, and late one evening a young farm-boy was brought in to me with a dislocated foot and a 'Pott's Fracture'——"

"In the name o' God, what's that?" enquired Mrs. Mangan.

"Fracture of the fibula, but the case I'm speaking of had the two bones broken at the ankle," explained Nurse Brennan, in her most professional manner; "sure I thought anyone'd know that! And I can tell you," she leaned towards Larry, striking the palm of her left hand with her little clenched right fist, as if to hammer the words into him, "I can assure *you,* that as bad as you thought you were, you don't know what pain *is* beside what that boy suffered!

Well, I sent for the doctor—a young brat of a fella that hadn't but just left college. 'He'll want an anæsthetic,' says he, 'I'll send down for Doctor ——' (I'll not tell you his name—Smith, I'll call him!) 'Do you give him some brandy, nurse,' says he, 'Dr. Smith'll be here soon.' Sure enough he was, and glad I was to see him, for the patient was suffering greatly, and the leg swelling every minyute. It was a long ward he was in, and no one at all in it but himself. At the far end there was a table and a lamp, and down at the table me gentlemen sat, and commenced to talk."

Nurse Brennan paused, and Mrs. Mangan gave the fire a well-directed poke, that set the flames branching upwards. The tale was resumed, in those cool and equable tones that express a more perfected indignation than any heat or haste could convey.

"Well, that was nine o'clock, and they talked there for two hours, and I giving the patient brandy, and expecting every minyute he'd collapse. And what do you suppose they were talking about? Fighting they were! Disputing which of them would perform the operation, and which would administer the chloroform!"

Mrs. Mangan laughed lightly, and said: "I wouldn't at all doubt it!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Larry.

"Not a bit impossible!" said Nurse Brennan, "and how d'ye think they settled it in the end? They arranged one of them would begin th' operation and go on for five minutes, and then he should stop and give the anæsthetic, and the other would go on with the leg! Oh, it's the case, I assure you! It was twelve o'clock at night before they were done!"

She paused, laughing a little at the hot questions with which Larry assailed her, but he could see the unshed tears gleaming in her eyes. "I was summoned to a private case next day; I don't know what happened to the unfortunate poor creature of a patient."

"A stiff leg he has, I'll be bound!" said Mrs. Mangan.

Larry lay silent. He saw it all. The long, dark ward, the white angel figure (he thought, romantically) bending over the tortured creature on the bed, and, far away, the pool of yellow light and in it those two—he sought in vain for adjectives to express what he thought of Dr. I'll-not-tell-you-his-name, and his young colleague.

CHAPTER XI

In the years that followed, "Larry's cads" came to be, for the young Talbot-Lowrys, a convenient designation for the friends into whose bosom Providence had seen fit to fling their cousin. But Larry never either approved or accepted it. He was entirely pleased with his new friends, and especially with that son of the house whose position he had usurped, Mr. Bartholomew Mangan.

Barty was a lengthy, languid, gentle youth, of nearly nineteen, darkly, pallidly handsome, sweet natured, and slovenly, like his mother, and, unlike her, poetical, idealistic, unpractical, shy, and self-conscious. He was, at this period, working in the office of one of the two solicitors, who, with the aid of a branch of a bank, a Petty Sessions Court, and the imposing, plate-glass bow-windows of Hallinan's hotel, enabled Cluhir to convince itself of its status as a town. Further proof of the civic importance of Cluhir was found in the existence of a debating club of very advanced political views among its young men, of which Barty Mangan was secretary. Its membership, if small, was select, since its Republican principles did not compel it to admit to its privileges shop-assistants, or artisans, while they automatically excluded members of the class that were usually referred to in the club discussions as "Carrion Crows," or if the orator's mood was mild, "the garrison." In Ireland the attitude of mind that is termed, alternately, Disloyalty or Patriotism, is largely a matter of class, and Barty Mangan's introduction of Master St. Lawrence Coppinger, as an honorary member of the club, partook of the nature of a shock to those of the faithful who were present at his first appearance in the club room, a severely plain apartment, that offered no

impediment in the matter of luxury to high thinking. But the faithful of the "Sons of Emmet" Club had nothing to fear from this half-fledged young Carrion Crow. The English school to which Larry had been sent had dulled the fire lit by the poems of The Spirit of the Nation, but it had not extinguished it. It had flickered for a time, during which Hunting had superseded Patriotism, and Mr. Jorrocks had reigned alone; but the oratory of the Sons of Emmet, to which Larry was now privileged to listen, had had the effect of restoring to life and vigour the long-neglected, half-forgotten tenets of the Companionage of Finn. Larry's store of enthusiasm was quite equal to supplying motive power for running two engines; hunting still held its own, and after a club debate in which he had taken an energetic part, even the most exclusive of the Sons of Emmet admitted that Barty's importation was worthy of the privilege that had been extended to him.

A spell of cold weather had compelled a postponement of Larry's return to his own home. When snow and frost visit a country unused to their attentions, they are treated with a respect that they do not receive elsewhere. The Doctor's orders were strict, and Larry spent the last days of his stay at No. 6, The Mall, seated in semi-invalid state by the dining-room fire, occupied, mainly, in the consumption of literature provided by his new friend, Mr. Barty Mangan, that consisted of poems, books, and pamphlets of precisely that shade of politics of which his family most thoroughly disapproved, and absorbing what would be, in their opinion, the most entirely poisonous points of view.

The Big Doctor, smoking a comfortable evening pipe over the fire, would join in the discussions between his son and his visitor, offering just as much opposition to Larry's revolutionary flights as was stimulating, and flattering his sense of youth and daring.

"We mustn't send him back to his auntie too much of a rebel altogether!" The Doctor would say, grinning at the enthusiast with his pipe wedged under a tooth; "isn't it

good enough for you to be a poor decent old Nationalist like myself? I'm sure there's no one would disapprove of *me,* is there, Annie?"

"Don't be too sure of that at all!" Mrs. Mangan would reply coquettishly, trying to look as if she did not agree with him; "wait till his auntie hears the notions Larry's taking up with, and she'll think we're all the worst in the world! And the Major! The Major'll go cracked-mad!"

"It doesn't matter where he goes!" says Larry, defiantly, "I've had these 'notions,' as you call them, for ages and ages!"

"Ah, God help you, child!" Mrs. Mangan would probably say, "keep quiet now, till I get you a glass of hot milk!"

Politics did not form the only point of contact that had been established between Larry and the Mangan household. Since his promotion to comparative convalescence, Tishy, daughter of the house, had entered more actively into his scheme of life, and the point of entrance was music. Some divergence in view as to music is more easily condoned, on both sides, than in the other realms of the spirit. It matters not from how far countries the travellers may come, or how widely sundered may be their ideals, there are rest-houses at which they can draw rein and find agreement. One of these, possibly the greatest of them, is folk song. Ireland, whose head is ever turned over her shoulder, looking to the past, has, in her folk song, at least, reason and justification for her preoccupation with what has been in her music, rather than with what is, or is to come. It is difficult to reconcile the eternal beauty of traditional Irish melody with the lack of musical interest and feeling that distinguishes the mass of modern Irish life. But, here and there, a string of the harp that has hung, mute, on Tara's walls for so many centuries, utters a sigh of sweet sound, and at Number 6, The Mall, Cluhir, the soul of music had still some power of inspiration.

This is, perhaps, a rather elaborate method of intimating that Dr. Mangan played the violin, moderately as to tech-

nique, but soundly as to intonation, and that he and his family sang, as a quartet, not only at charity concerts, but also for their own pleasure, in their own home. Music, more than the other arts, demands sympathy, and an audience. In Larry, the Mangan Quartet recognised that both requirements were supplied, together with a glorifying enthusiasm of appreciation—though this they scarcely recognised—that gilded for him their achievements, as the firelight had edged the profile of Nurse Brennan with pure gold. Larry, it has already been said, had the artistic temperament; he had also a generous heart, and he was of an age when appreciation is spontaneous, and criticism is either unborn, or is only an echo of some maturer mind. Therefore, as he lay on the Mangan blue rep-covered drawing-room sofa, with a satin cushion adorned with Tishy's conception of roses, in water-colour, under his head, while pretty Nurse Brennan gently massaged his wrist, and the Mangan Quartet warbled: "O, believe me if all those endearing young charms," or "When thro' life unblest we rove," Larry passed into ecstasy, that, had he been one degree less of a schoolboy, might have been exhaled in tears; even as the sun draws water from the sea, in a mist of glory, and returns it to the world again in rain.

Tishy was accompanist, and sang alto; her mother, who knew nothing of notation, and sang by ear, sang treble; Barty had a supple and pleasing tenor, and the Doctor possessed a solemn bass, deep and dark as a thundercloud, yet mellow as the hum of a hive of honey-bees on a summer morning; a rare voice and a beautiful one, that had its counterpart in the contralto that already, at sixteen and a half, had given Tishy power and distinction among her fellows.

At this time, Miss Letitia Mangan's views, and those of her parents, as to her future, musical or otherwise, were entirely divergent. Hers held as central figure a certain medical student, with an incipient red moustache, and a command of boxes of chocolate that was bewildering to those

acquainted with his income. Quite other were Dr. Mangan's intentions with regard to his daughter, but he was satisfied to keep them out of sight; he was aware that, in all solid buildings, the deeper and farther out of sight the foundation, the more assured is the result.

It is possible that the idea of a farewell entertainment in Larry's honour emanated from the Big Doctor; if so, he had erased his tracks very thoroughly, and it was regarded by Mrs. Mangan's intimates as a final brandishing of her trophy before she was forced to relinquish it. Larry was indisputably a trophy, and Heaven was considered to have exercised a very undue discrimination in Mrs. Mangan's favour when it threw him into her house and her hands. It was a very select party, only a score or so of boys and girls, with the elders appertaining to them. Nurse Brennan had departed, taking with her Larry's young affections, and a gift, costly and superfluous, of a silver-mounted mirror, which was accompanied by some chaste lines, expressive of Master Coppinger's desire to share its privileges, whose composition had kept him happy throughout a long, wet afternoon.

The party, having opened with lemonade, tea and innumerable cakes, moved on through "a little music," (contributed exclusively by the Mangan Quartet) to games. Larry, afflicted by the discovery that he had, during his illness, outgrown his evening clothes, found himself fated to do conspicuous things in the centre of a space, cleared as for a prize-fight, in the Mangan drawing-room. Problems in connection with a ship that came from China. Exhausting efforts in guessing absurdities, that usually necessitated withdrawal to the landing outside the door with a giggling schoolgirl, and collaboration with her in a code of complicated signals. And, blackest feature of all, mistakes in any of these arduous matters entailed "forfeits," and the process entitled "paying the forfeits," meant a concentration of attention upon a young gentleman, conscious to agony of the fact that his trousers left his ankle-bones unshielded from the public gaze.

It was sufficiently distressing to lie at full length on the carpet, and declare oneself to be the length of a looby, and the breadth of a booby, but what was that as compared with sitting, blindfolded, on a chair, and guessing, among many kisses, which had been bestowed by "the girl he loved best?" As if he loved any of them! These pert and blowsy schoolgirls, with hideous voices, and arrogant curls, or crimped lion-manes of aggressive hair! He, with "his heart set all upon a snowy coif!" (as he chose to wrest Mr. Yeats' line to his own purposes).

It was singular in how many of these exercises, of which the greater number included kissing, he found himself involved with Tishy Mangan. Tishy was in a bad temper. The red-headed medical student had not been honoured with an invitation. Dr. Mangan had struck his name from the list of guests saying that they had enough without him, and Tishy knew her father too well to protest. Dr. Mangan was in the habit of saying that he always left all household affairs "in the hands of the ladies." He did not add, as he might have done, that these hands lay within his, and that their owners had long since realised that it was advisable to respond to any indication of pressure. His daughter, however, while she submitted to the inevitable, saw no reason why she should deny herself the solace of sulking, nor of avenging herself of his tyranny on "his fine pet," as she, in high indignation, described Larry to herself. Master Coppinger might be a man of property and the owner of Coppinger's Court, yes, or Dublin Castle, for all she cared! Pappy might say what he liked, but *she* wouldn't be bothered with a boy like that! And there was Ned Cloherty—(this was the medical student)—that she had as good as asked to come—and what could she say to him now, she wondered? So Tishy sulked, and resented the Hidden Hand, that so inevitably linked her with the owner of Coppinger's Court, as much as did that man of property himself.

The evening wore on; with romping, with screaming,

with enormous consumption of various foods, and with an ever-heightening temperature, that was specially noticeable among those seniors who had not disdained the brew of punch that had coincided with the announcement of midnight, made, with maddening deliberation, by Mrs. Mangan's cuckoo-clock. The usual delirium of cracker-head-dresses had befallen the company. Larry, decorated with a dunce's cap, placed upon his yellow head by a jovial matron, found himself fated, by a final effort of penalising fancy on the part of another matron, to select "a young lady," to conduct her to the topmost step of the staircase, and there, on his knees, to kiss either her shoe-buckle or her lips; "whichever he likes best!" decreed the matron, archly.

It is strange how the reserves and reticences of childhood, the things that offend, the things that bring agony, are forgotten by so many of those who have left childhood behind. In extenuation of this lively and kindly lady, it may be said that the manners and customs of her early youth were not those to which Larry was habituated. Yet, one might have thought that a glance at Larry's face would have sufficed to induce Rhadamanthus himself to remit the penalty. Not so Mrs. Whelply, the arbitrator.

"Oh, look at the pout on him! What a naughty boy! If you don't take care, I'll put a worse task on you!"

Larry, oblivious of the dunce's cap, feeling himself in the grip of a social machine that was too strong for him, looked round upon the company. Hot, pink faces, shining eyes and teeth, Mœnad hair, on all sides. Then he caught sight of Tishy's eyes, scornful and amused, regarding him as he stood irresolute, and his spirit responded to the spur of contempt. He crossed the open space of floor to where she was seated on the blue rep sofa, took off the dunce's cap with a flourish, and, with a low bow, offered her his arm.

A chorus of approval, weighted by the Big Doctor's big laugh, greeted the action. Tishy, cornered, accepted the arm, the door was swung open for them, and ostentatiously slammed behind them.

Larry, silent, and very angry, mounted the stairs quickly, and Tishy perforce, her hand gripped by his elbow, followed him. At the highest step but one, Larry stood aside, and Tishy ascended, and turning, faced him from the top. They looked at each other for a moment in silence. Both were furiously angry, resenting the compulsion that had forced them into an absurd position.

Then Tishy said insolently: "Well! Which will you have? My shoe-buckle or my lips? Take your choice!"

She poked her foot out over the edge of the step confidently.

A spark shot from Larry's angry heart to his blue eyes. He looked up at Tishy, and something suddenly masterful awoke in him. Confound her! He wouldn't have her laughing at him!

"I'll have your lips, please!" he said, mounting to the step beside her.

With schoolboy roughness he flung his arm round her shoulders. She was a little taller than he, but she did not withdraw herself; she was curiously aware that her point of view was changing. She looked for an instant in his eyes, and then she laid her lips on his.

Larry found, with surprise, that they returned the pressure of his own as he kissed her. The spark that had been in his eyes seemed to have flown to his lips, and met another spark in hers.

There was a moment of silence. Larry found himself a little out of breath, and somehow bewildered. There was more in it than he thought. He didn't quite know what to do next.

"Thank you very much," he said, stiffly, and offered his arm.

In silence they walked down the stairs again. The piano had begun, and "Sir Roger de Coverley" was being thundered forth. At the door they met the Doctor. Larry released Tishy's arm.

"If you don't mind," he said to the Doctor, "I think I'll go up to bed. I'm tired."

After he had got to his room he shook himself, much as a dog renews its vitality by shaking its ears. Then he poured some water into the basin and washed his hot face, scrubbing his lips with the sponge.

Yet, to his infinite annoyance, he seemed still to feel the pressure of Tishy's warm mouth on his.

CHAPTER XII

It is, or should be, superfluous to say that Miss Frederica Coppinger viewed with disfavour, that was the more poignant for its helplessness, Larry's adoption and assimilation by the Mangan family.

"Disastrous!" she said in a tragic voice, to the Rector of Knockcoil parish. "If he were a Protestant it wouldn't matter so much; but, as things are, for *him* to be thrown among these second-rate, Nationalistic, Roman Catholics——!"

The intensity of Miss Coppinger's emotions silenced him. She had indeed beaten her biggest drum, and she knew it.

The Rector, the Reverend Charles Fetherston, nodded his head with solemnity, and made a conscientious effort to remember what she was speaking of. He was not much in the habit of attending to what was said to him, finding his own thoughts more interesting than those of his parishioners. The parishioners, being aware of this peculiarity, put it down, very naturally, to eccentricity for which he was rather to be pitied than condemned, and his popularity was in no way abated by it. Mr. Fetherston was unmarried, in age about sixty; tall, stout, red-faced, of good family, a noted woodcock shot and salmon fisher, a carpenter, and an incessant pipe-smoker. These being his leading gifts, it will probably, and with accuracy, be surmised by persons conversant with the Irish Church, that he was a survival of its earliest days, when it was still an avocation suitable for gentlemen, and one in which they could indulge without any taint of professionalism being laid to their charge. He was immensely respected and admired by the poor people of the parish (none of whom were included in his small and well-to-do

congregation), the fact that he was what is known as "old stock," giving him a prestige among the poorer Roman Catholics, that they would have denied to St. Peter. He shared with Major Talbot-Lowry the position of consultant in feuds, and relieving officer in distress, and, being rich, liberal, easily bored, and not particularly sympathetic to affliction, he was accustomed to stanch the flow of tears and talk alike, with a form of solace that rarely failed to meet the case, and was always acceptable. With Miss Coppinger, he felt, regretfully, that five shillings could in no way be brought to bear upon her problem, and with an effort he withdrew his mind from a new hinge that he thought of fitting to a garden-gate, and applied it to Larry.

"How old is the boy now? Sixteen last October? He doesn't look as much—you'll see he'll outgrow all that nonsense of Nationalism! Send him to Oxford as soon as you can. He'll soon get hold of some other tomfoolery there, and forget this. Seven devils worse than the first, in fact!"

The Reverend Charles laughed, wheezily, and began, automatically, to fill a pipe, an indication of a change of mental outlook.

"Worse?" cried Miss Frederica, ardently; "no indeed, Mr. Fetherston! Better! Far better! *Any*thing is preferable to this—this Second-rate Sedition!"

When Frederica perorated, and this remark partook of the nature of peroration, it was as though she took a header into deep water. By the time she had again risen to the surface of her emotions, the Reverend Charles Fetherston had returned to the hinge of the garden-gate, and Miss Coppinger, knowing her man, made no attempt to recall him. She had a very special regard for her rector, of a complex sort that is not quite easy to define. There was veneration in it, the veneration that was inculcated in her youth for the clergy; there was the compassion that many capable and self-confident women bestow upon any man to whom Providence has denied a feminine protector; there was a regretful pity for his shortcomings—(but half-acknowledged, even to her-

self)—as a Minister of the Word, counterbalanced by respect for his worldly wisdom; above all, there was the deep, peculiar interest that was excited in her by any clergyman, merely in virtue of his office, a person whose trade it was to occupy himself with the art and practice of religion, which was a subject that had, quite apart from its spiritual side, the same appeal for her that the art and practice of the theatre has for many others. (It is hard to imagine any simile that would have shocked Frederica more than this; in all her years of strenuous, straightforward life, she had never, as she would have said, set foot in a theatre.)

Frederica had been born at Coppinger's Court, and she had passed her childhood there, but her youth had been spent in Dublin, in the hot heart of a parish devoted to good works, and to a pastor whose power and authority was in no degree less absolute than that of any of the "Romish priests" whom he so heartily denounced. She was brought up in that school of Irish Low Church Protestantism that makes more severe demands upon submission and credulity than any other, and yet more fiercely arraigns other creeds on those special counts. It is quite arguable that Irish people, like the Israelites who so ardently desired a king, enjoy and thrive under religious oppression, and it is beyond dispute that among the oppressed, of both the rival creeds, are saints whose saintliness has gained force from the systems to which they have given their allegiance. To Frederica the practice of her cult both inwardly in her heart, and outwardly in the work of St. Matthew's Parish, was the mainspring of her existence. It was also her pastime. She would analyse a sermon, as Dick Lowry would discuss a run, and with the same eager enjoyment. She assented with enthusiasm to the Doctrine of Eternal Damnation, and a gentler-hearted creature than she never lived. She would have gone to the stake for the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible; she was as convinced that the task of Creation was completed in a week, as she was that she paid the Coppinger's Court workmen for six days' work every Saturday evening. In short, the good Frederica was

a survival of an earlier and more earnest period, and her religious beliefs were only comparable, in their sincerity and simplicity, with those of the Roman Catholic poor people, whose spiritual prospects were to her no less black (theoretically) than were hers to them.

Those who know Ireland will have no difficulty in believing that Miss Coppinger had no warmer sympathisers in her feelings concerning Larry and the Mangan household than the Coppinger's Court retainers, despite the fact that none of them were of her communion, nor did they share her political views. And no less will those who know Ireland, recognise that in the Irish countryside it is the extremes that touch, and that there is a sympathy and understanding between the uppermost and the lowest strata of Irish social life, which is not extended, by either side, to the intervening one. Thus, it was that Frederica could, and did converse with her work-people and her peasant neighbours, with a freedom and an implicit confidence in their good breeding, that it is to be feared she was incapable of extending to Larry's new acquaintances in Cluhir. Possibly the outdoor life, and the mutual engrossment in outdoor affairs, explain, in some degree, this sympathy, but at the root of it is the certainty on both sides, that the well-bred, even the chivalrous point of view, will govern their intercourse.

It may seem somewhat excessive to use the word chivalry in connection with Mrs. Twomey, the Coppinger's Court dairy-woman. Yet, I dare to say that as great a soul filled the four feet four inches that comprised her excessively plain little person, as ever inspired warrior or fighting queen in the brave days of old. Bred and born under the Talbot-Lowrys, she had crossed the river when she married one of the Coppinger's Court workmen, and for close on thirty-five years she had milked the cows and ruled the dairy according to her own methods, which were as rigorous as they were remarkable, and altered not with modern enlightenment, or conformed with hygienic laws. Her husband was a feeble creature, whose sole claim to distinction was his inability

to speak English. At the time that "The Family," (which is, say, Frederica and Larry) returned, he had become quite blind, and he passed a cloistered existence in a dark corner of his little cottage, sitting, with his hat always upon his head, a being seemingly as withdrawn from the current of life as one of the smoky brown and white china dogs on the shelf above the wide hearth.

The legend ran that when he was young, a marriage had been arranged for him. On the appointed wedding-day he had gone to the chapel, the priest was there, and the wedding-guests, but no bride came. Michael Twomey therefore, after a fruitless exercise of patience, left the chapel in deep wrath and humiliation, and proceeded to walk home again. On the road he was faced by a string of laughing girls, and among them there was little Mary Driscoll. Mary had then, no doubt, such grace as youth can give, and that she had, at least, good teeth, was obvious to the disgruntled Michael Twomey, as she was grinning at him from ear to ear. Also, possibly, his sight may not even then have been of the best. Be that as it may, Michael caught at Mary's arm.

"Come on to the chapel, Mary!" he shouted at her, in the Irish that was a more common speech in those days than it is now; "The priest is there yet, and the money is in my pocket. I'll marry you!"

Michael had made a luckier hit than he knew. Little Mary Driscoll recognised the sporting quality of the suggestion, and being a girl of spirit acceded to it.

Mary had been to America. She was one of the many of her class who put forth fearlessly for the United States, adventuring upon the unknown without any of the qualms that would beset them were the bourne London, or even one of the cities of their native land. Wasn't Mary's mother's sisther's daughter, and Maggie Brian from Tullagh, and the dear knows how many more cousins and neighbours, before her in it? Didn't her brother that was marrit in it,

send her her ticket, and wasn't there good money to be airned in it?

These queries, that, as may be seen by anyone with half an eye, answered themselves, having been propounded by little Mary Driscoll, she, roaring crying, and keened by all her relatives to the coach-door—no railway being within thirty miles of her home—departed to America, and was swallowed up by "Boyshton" for the space of five years, during the passage of which, since she could neither read nor write, no communication passed between her and her parents, save only the postal orders that, through an intermediary, she unfailingly sent them. Then there was a month that the postal order came not, and while the old father and mother were wondering was Mary dead, or what ailed her, Mary walked in, uglier than ever in her Boyshton clothes, and it was gloriously realised that not only was not Mary dead at all, but that she had as much saved as would bury the old people, or maybe marry herself.

Mary had not enjoyed America. She wouldn't get her health in it, she said.

("Ye wouldn't see a fat face or a red cheek on one o' thim that comes back," assented Mary's mother); and for as little as she was, Mary continued, she'd rather bring her bones home with herself to Cunnock-a-Ceoil. (A cryptic phrase signifying that though she recognised, humorously, her own unworthiness, she still attached sufficient importance to her person to wish to bestow it upon the place of her birth.) Not long after her return and restoration to health, the episode of her marriage had occurred, and she had settled down into the soil of Ireland again, with, possibly, a slightly increased freedom of manner, but, saving this, with no more token on her of her dash into the new world, than has the little fish that lies and pants on the river bank for a moment, before the angler contemptuously chucks him into the stream again.

Michael and Mary Twomey had been on the staff of Coppinger's Court for a full thirty years when, in the full-

ness of time, Frederica returned to her ancient home, bringing with her the young heir to it, and all its accessory tenanted lands. Not Green Dragon or The Norreys King-at-Arms, or any other pontiff of pedigrees, could attach a higher importance to gentle blood than did little elderly Mary Twomey, elderly, but still as indomitably nimble and resolute as when in Frederica's childhood she would catch the donkey for her, and run after it, belabouring it in its rider's interest, for half an afternoon.

In spite of the fact that Miss Coppinger's youth had been spent, chiefly, in a town, the love of the country, ingrained during her first years, was merely dormant, and it revived with her return to Coppinger's Court. The garden, the farm, the hens, the cattle, the dairy, were all interests to which she returned with that renewal of early passion, that has in it the fervour of youth as well as the depth of maturity. She read agricultural papers insatiably, and believed all that she read, accepting the verbal inspiration of their advertisements with the enthusiasm of her religious beliefs. She was a doctrinaire farmer, and she applied to the garden, the farm and the poultry-yard, the same zeal and intensity that had made her in earlier days the backbone of committees, and the leading exponent of the godly activities of St. Matthew's. She was regarded by the heretofore rulers of these various provinces with a mixture of respect, contempt, and apprehension. She was an incalculable force, with a predisposition towards novelty, and novelty, especially if founded on theory, is abhorrent to such as old Johnny Galvin the steward, or Peter Flood the gardener, or, stiffest in her own conceit of all, Mrs. Twomey of the dairy.

"Master Larry's coming home from Cluhir to-morrow, Mary," Miss Coppinger announced, with satisfaction, to the peculiar confection of grey hair and black chenille net that represented the back of Mrs. Twomey's head, her forehead being pressed against the side of the cow that she was milking.

"Thang-aade!" replied Mrs. Twomey fervently, express-

ing in this concise form her gratitude to her Creator for what she considered to be Larry's release from a very vile durance. "He's long enough in it already!"

"The Doctor wouldn't let me move him any sooner," replied Miss Coppinger, apologetically.

"The divil doubt him, what a fool he'd be!" said Mrs. Twomey with a bitter laugh. "Aren't they all sayin' as sure as gun is iron it's what he wants that he'll see his daughter in Coppinger's Court before he dies!"

"What nonsense!" said Miss Coppinger, warmly; "I should like to know who is saying it!"

Mrs. Twomey, milking ceaselessly, slewed her head a little and looked at her employer out of the corner of an eye as bright and as cunning as a hen's, and said: "As rich as your Honour is, you couldn't put a penny into the mouth of every man that's sayin' it!"

"I'm surprised at you, Mary," said Frederica, indignantly, "You ought to have more sense than to repeat such rubbish!"

To this reproach, Mrs. Twomey responded with a long and jubilant crow of laughter.

"Yerra, gerr'l alive—!" she corrected herself quickly. "My lady alive, I should say—sure a little thing like me'd tell lies as fast as a hen'd pick peas!"

The modesty, as well as the accuracy, of this statement silenced Miss Coppinger for a moment.

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she resumed with much severity. "It is amazing to me how a decent, respectable little woman like you can not only tell lies, but boast of it!"

"Ah ha! I'm the same owld three and fourpince, an' will be till I die!" triumphed Mrs. Twomey, with another screech of laughter, removing her tiny person, her milk-pail, and her stool from under the cow. "An' I won't be long dyin'!" another screech; "an' it won't take many to carry me to Cunnock-a-Ceoil Churchyard!"

A final and prolonged burst of mirth succeeded this announcement, during which the unrepentant Three and Four-

pence swung the pail on to the hook of the swinging-balance for weighing the milk that was Miss Coppinger's latest and most detested innovation.

"Look at that now what she has for you, Miss! Shixteen pints! An' I'll engage I'll knock thirteen ounces o' butther out of it! That's the little bracket cow that yourself and Johnny Galvin wanted to sell, an' I withstood ye!"

This was of the nature, jointly, of a counter-attack and of a truckle to the system of milk-records, but Frederica heeded it not. As a matter of fact, she was still somewhat discomposed by the insinuations that were more numerous than the pennies she was believed to possess.

"I hope, Mary," she said, repressively, "that if you should hear any more talk of that kind about Dr. Mangan, you will do your best to contradict it. He has been extremely kind to Master Larry, and it annoys me very much that such things should be said."

Mrs. Twomey's supple mind was swift to realise that a change of attitude was advisable.

"Why then, upon my truth and body, I'd blame no one that wanted Master Larry! That little fella is in tune with all the world!" she declared; "but those people do be always gibbing and gabbing! Give them a smell, and they're that suspeecious they'll do the rest! Sure I said to that owld man below, Mikey Twomey"—thus dispassionately was Mrs. Twomey wont to speak of her husband—"I says to him, that your Honour was satisfied to leave Master Larry back in Cluhir till he'd be well agin. They were all sayin' the child wouldn't be said by ye to come back! Didn't I have to put the heighth o' the house o' curses to it before he'd believe me!"

"Intolerable nonsense!" said Frederica, hotly,

CHAPTER XIII

PEOPLE have said, retrospectively, that the rise of the Mangan family dated from the fall of Larry Coppinger into the Feorish River. This may, or may not have been the case, but it is certain that Mrs. Mangan's way through the world took at about this time an upward trend, and one of the most perceptible ascending jerks was the result of Lady Isabel Talbot-Lowry's Sale of Work.

This function had been ordained with, for object, the provision of a fund for the renovation of the parish church of Knock Ceoil, and was obviously a matter without interest for persons of another denomination. Lady Isabel, and Miss Coppinger, and others of their friends and neighbours, slaved at the provision of munitions for it, as good women will slave at such enterprises, squandering energy on the construction of those by-products of the rag-bag that were specially consecrated to charitable purposes by the ladies of their period.

"No one will want to buy this rubbish," said Miss Coppinger, who never tried to deceive even herself, "but people will have to spend their money on something, and *we're* not going to raffle bottles of brandy—as they did at that R.C. Bazaar in Riverstown!"

Frederica could be just, but when a question of religion intervened, she found it hard to be generous.

The Sale of Work took place during the September that followed the winter of Larry's disaster, and it was indisputable that the Mangan family contributed materially to its success. Mrs. Mangan was of a class that is accustomed to get its money's worth, and was herself known and re-

spected as an able and inveterate haggler. Yet, at the Mount Music Sale, she was content to hide her talent beneath innumerable chair-backs and night-dress cases, purchased, uncomplainingly, at the prices marked on them, and to permit the contents of an apparently inexhaustible purse to flow in a goldem stream from stall to stall. Her family were no less in evidence, the Big Doctor offering himself a cheerful victim on the shrine of raffles, even attaching himself to Christian as a coadjutor in the sale of tickets for the disposal of one of Rinka's latest progeny. Mrs. Mangan's son and daughter, something subdued by unfamiliar surroundings, were, on the disposal of the puppy-tickets, taken in hand by their father, and were, with an eloquence that seemed meant for a larger audience, made acquainted with the notable objects of the house.

"If I could get hold of your mother, now," the Big Doctor would say, "I'd like her to see this," or "Look at that picture, Tishy! That's a lovely woman! The Major's grandmother, I believe. We'll ask Miss Judith—'pon my honour, it might have been done of herself!"

Miss Judith, with a fruit and flower stall near the portrait in question, coldly admitted the relationship, and ignored the question of the likeness. Judith was of the age of intolerance; moreover, she was at that moment in the act of selling a button-hole to Bill Kirby, and the Doctor's enthusiam was undesired.

The little family party moved on, while Dr. Mangan, with the ease of an *habitué,* indicated to his son and daughter the ancestral portraits in the dining-room, the Cromwellian arms on the staircase, the coats-of-arms, the Indian weapons, the foxes' masks in the hall. The son and daughter received the information coldly. It was their first introduction to the interior of Mount Music, and while Tishy was filled with a great resolve to be impressed by nothing, Barty was silenced by those tortures that unfamiliar surroundings have power to inflict upon the shy.

In his determination to instruct his young in all the pos-

sible objects of interest, Dr. Mangan strolled away from the crowded scene of the sale, and led them down the long passage, dedicated to sporting prints, that led to the library.

"There's a picture there that's worth seeing, of a Meet at Coppinger's Court in the time of Larry's grandfather," he announced impressively, as he opened the door. "The Talbot-Lowrys and the Coppingers were always fine sportsmen——"

A tall old screen stood between the door and the fireplace; from behind it a hunted voice said:

"Who the devil's there now?"

Dr. Mangan thought, complacently: "My diagnosis was correct!" Aloud he said to his son and daughter, in a tone of hoarse consternation: "To think of our blundering in on the Major like this! Here! Away now, the pair of you!"

He advanced from behind the screen.

"Major! My most humble apologies! I never thought of you being here! I was showing that boy and girl of mine some of your beautiful things."

Major Talbot-Lowry was unlike his daughter Judith in many things, and not least in his easy sufferance of those whom she, in youthful arrogance, called cads.

"Come in, Doctor, and have a cigar in peace," he said, hospitably, putting on one side the novel he was reading. "I thought you were Evans, or one of the maids, coming to bother me. This damned show has turned the house upside down!"

"Well, it seems a great success," said Dr. Mangan cordially.

"Very good of you to come," responded his host, "more especially when it's—er—it's—er—such a purely local affair——"

Dr. Mangan understood that he was receiving the meed of religious tolerance.

"Well, Major," he said, expansively, "I lived long enough one time in England to learn that we mustn't give in too much to the clerical gentlemen! My own instinct is

to be neighbourly, and to let my friends mind their own religion."

"Quite so, quite so," said Major Dick, magnanimously, forgetting, for the moment, those epithets that, in his more heated moments, he was accustomed to apply to the ministers of the Church to which he did not belong. "Quite so, Doctor. I'm all for toleration, and let the parsons fight it out among 'em! Busy men, like you and me, haven't time to worry about these affairs—we've other things to think about!" He stretched a long arm for a box of cigars, and handed it to his visitor; "sit down for a bit. There's no hurry. The ladies can have it all their own way for a while!"

Dr. Mangan lowered his huge person into an armchair of suitable proportions, and for some moments smoked his cigar in appreciative silence. As a matter of fact, he was planning an approach to the subject that had instigated his visit to the library, but he was in no hurry to begin upon it, remembering that the longest way round is often the shortest way home.

"By the way, Major," he said, taking the cigar from his mouth, and regarding it with affection, "did some one tell me that you were looking for a farming horse?"

"If they didn't, they might have," replied Dick. "McKinnon's at me to get another. I was going to ask you if you knew of anything?"

"Well, now, that's funny. I was wondering to myself this morning what I'd do with that big brown horse of mine. He'll not go hunting again, he never got the better of that hurt he got. But he's the very cut of a farm-horse. You see, the poor devil had to carry *me!*" ended the Big Doctor, with a laugh at himself.

"I'll tell McKinnon of him. He wants a horse that will—" a recital of the accomplishments exacted by Dick's steward followed.

Dr. Mangan listened with attention.

"Tell McKinnon he'd better have him over on trial. I

know him and his requirements! The horse mightn't be able to play the piano for him!" said the Doctor, facetiously. "I'm not afraid of *you,* Major, but I've a great respect for Mr. McKinnon!"

"Oh, I'll tell old Mack he'll be lucky to get him," said Dick, with his pleasant laugh; "you and I will strike the bargain!"

The approach had been pegged out, and Dr. Mangan turned, for the moment, to other subjects.

It was a damp and sodden day near the beginning of September, and a comfortable turf fire centralised and gave point to the room, as a fire inevitably does. Major Talbot-Lowry was in the habit of saying that the day of the month never warmed anybody yet, and if it was only for the sake of the books—the truth being that the library fire at Mount Music had never, in the memory of housemaid, been extinguished save only when "the Major was out of home." Dick, like most out-of-door men, considered that fresh air should be kept in its proper place, outside the walls of the house, and an ancient atmosphere, in which the varied scents of turf, tobacco, old books, and old hound-couples, all had their share, filled the large, dingy old room. Dusty and composite squirrel-hoards of objects that defy classification, covered outlying tables, and lay in heaps on the floor, awaiting that resurrection to useful life that Major Talbot-Lowry's faith held would some day be theirs, and were, in the meantime, the despair and demoralisation of housemaids.

Deep in the bearskin rug in front of the fire (a trophy of one of the rifles that filled a glass-fronted case over the mantel-shelf) lay the two little fox-terriers, Rinka and Tashpy, in moody and determined repose. For a brief period of suffering they had attempted to cleave to Christian; but as the throng grew, and the time for tea lingered, they had, in high offence, betaken themselves to their ultimate citadel, the library.

"I suppose it was her pup I was raffling awhile ago," remarked Dr. Mangan, presently, as Rinka languidly rose,

and having stretched herself, and yawned, musically and meretriciously, put her nose on his broad knee, deliberating as to whether the distinction of a human lap outweighed the lowly comfort of the bearskin.

"Doggie! Poor doggie! Down, now, down!" Dr. Mangan had no idea how to talk to dogs, and he did not wish Rinka to sit on his best grey trousers.

"Hit her a smack!" said Major Dick; "don't let her bother you. Christian has spoilt these dogs till they're perfect nuisances! Yes, it's her pup. Who won it? It ought to be a clinker; it was the best of the lot——"

"I d'no did they draw for it yet. I took three tickets for it myself," said the Doctor. "I want it for a sort of a cousin of me own—a very sporting chap that's coming to Cluhir; he asked me could I get him a dog."

"What's he going to do in Cluhir?" asked Dick, carelessly.

The approach was now clear, and Dr. Mangan began to advance.

"Well, he's just taken his degree. He's a doctor, and he's coming here for a while. He can give me a help while he's looking out for a dispensary. He'd like some place where he'd get a little hunting now and then. I expect you know his father, Major—old Tom Aherne, of Pribawn——"

Major Talbot-Lowry became more interested.

"You don't say old Tom's son is a doctor! By Jove! That's very creditable to him—a decent old fellow Tom was—and you say he wants to hunt? That's the right sort of doctor! Look here!"

Dick sat up, the light of inspiration woke in his ingenuous blue eyes, he wrinkled his forehead with the super-intelligent concentration of a not very brilliant intellect. "Didn't I hear that old Fogarty is giving up the Dispensary here? Why don't you run him for that?"

The shepherding of Dick Lowry was really an affair of a simplicity unworthy of preparation made by that *rusé* old collie, the Big Doctor. Nevertheless, being an artist, he continued to play the game.

"Knock Ceoil! Begad, that's a great notion! Now I come to think of it, I did hear something of old Fogarty giving up, but somehow I never thought of young Danny Aherne in connection with it. I thought I was as well able as any man to put two and two together, but I declare I might never have thought of it if it hadn't been for you! They say, if you're too close to a thing, you can't see it!"

Thus did the collie yap, while the sheep (who was a member of the Dispensary Committee) gratified, and pleasantly conscious of originality, trotted up the path and into the fold that had been prepared for it.

Meanwhile, in what house-agents call the reception-rooms, the Sale of Work raged on, with auctions, with raffles, with card-fortunes, told in a cave of rugs by a devoted sorceress, in a temperature that would inure her to face with composure the witch's destiny at the stake; with "occasional music," that fell upon the turmoil of talk more softly than any petals from blown roses on the grass, and was just sufficiently perceptible to impart the requisite flavour of festivity. One item of the musical programme had indeed had power to still the storm, but since it was contributed by the Mangan Quartet, it must be admitted that, charming though it was, it owed something of its success to surprise. The countryside had rallied to Lady Isabel with a response that did credit to her as to them, yet, thronged though the rooms were the Mangan family shone with a unique lustre as alone representing the mighty Church of Rome.

"Wonderful of them to come!" said the Church of Ireland ladies approvingly; "the only R.C.'s here!"

Yet the Mangan family was not quite alone in this representative position; young Mr. Coppinger, their (as it were) inventor and patentee, shared it with them, and was, moreover, beginning, for the first time, and not without displeasure, to realise something of the social complications that are involved by the difference of creed. It was a matter of atmosphere; quite intangible, and quite perceptible. Larry was discovering that he was something of an anomaly. "Only

an R.C. by accident," as he had heard someone say, in apparent extenuation (a benevolence that he found irritating). He was learning the meaning of the sudden silences, the too obvious changes of the course of conversation, that seemed to occur when he drew near. He had not, as yet, formulated these things to himself, but, on this turbulent afternoon, it was possibly some livelier apprehension of them that made him gravitate towards Barty Mangan, as towards a fellow pariah, and induced him to seek with him the far asylum of the schoolroom. There, save for the schoolroom cat, they were alone, and they sat for some minutes in grateful silence, looking out, across misty stretches of grass, to the river, and beyond it to the dense green of the trees of Coppinger's Court. The sky was very low and grey; by leaning out of the window a little, a far-off reach of river, at the western end of the valley, could be descried; above it there was a narrow slit in the clouds, and through it a faint and lovely primrose light fell, like a veil, that hid, while it told of the deathbed repentance of the dying day. Larry dragged his chair into the corner of the window, and watched the growing glory of the sunset with all his ardent soul in his eyes.

Whatever this boy did, he did vividly, and to Barty Mangan, seated on the shadow side, watching him, he was, as ever, a pageant, a being of incalculable impulse, of flashing intensity and splendour.

"Where on earth did you go, Barty? I looked about for you for ages before I found you; but there was such an awful crowd of women—I'm jolly glad to get out of it!" Larry leaned back in his chair and proceeded to light a cigarette, as an assertion of the rights of a man of nearly seventeen.

"My father was taking Tishy and me about, showing us the house," replied Barty, apologetically. (As a matter of fact, he said "me fawther," but if this, and similar details of pronunciation, are not known by nature, it is labour in vain to attempt to indicate them by means of the wholly in-

adequate English alphabet.) "Larry," he went on, with the candour that made a gentleman of him, "I never was in a house like this before. I declare to you it frightens me! I feel like a rat gone astray! I was in the dining-room by myself, looking at the pictures, and that old fella' of a butler came in and frightened the heels off me! He kept an eye on me that was like a flame from a blow-pipe! You'd say he thought I was going to steal the house!"

"I expect he did, too," said Larry, "especially if he thought that you were a pal of mine. He hates me like blazes. He's one of those damned Orangemen. I say, do you remember that thing in The Spirit of the Nation, 'Orange and Green will carry the Day'? I bet old Evans would rather lose, any day, than be 'linked in his might' with a Papist like you or me! It's a most extraordinary thing how religion plays the devil with Ireland!"

There are certain standard truisms that must be rediscovered by each successive generation (possibly because they have bored the preceding one to extinction), and Larry was of the age at which truisms reveal themselves as new ideas, and sing and shine with the radiancy of morning stars. He was also young enough, and just sufficiently interested in religion, to find it exciting to denounce it. The fervour of his indictment lifted him from his chair, and he stood, with the evening light on his hot face, enjoying his theme, and his audience.

"I stayed with some people in England last holidays, friends of my people's; Protestants they were, too—'Sour-faces,' as the 'Leader' calls them!—and they didn't give a blow what religion I was! That was *my* affair, they thought —and so it was, too! Not like this crowd here—I don't mean my *own* people, you know," he added hastily, "they're all right!"

"Oh, I'm sure!" said Barty, in instant assent.

"I hate England, of course," continued the student of The Spirit of the Nation, hurriedly, "but I must say I get sick

of this eternal blackguarding of Catholics by Protestants, and Protestants by Catholics——"

"Ah, they don't mean it half the time!" put in Barty, pacifically; "it's just a trick they have!"

"Well, I don't care," said Larry, who didn't like being interrupted, with a fling of his head; "they shouldn't do it! I hear people shutting up when I come into the room—just as if I didn't jolly well know they were abusing the priests or something like that. And if they only knew it, *I* don't care a curse how much they abuse them!"

He took an angry pull at his cigarette, glaring at the unoffending Barty. "'Tisn't the man I respects, 'tis the office!' That's what Mrs. Twomey said, when I was chaffing her for dragging gravel up from the river to put in front of her house, because the priest, whom she loathes, was going to have a 'station' there!"

The orator paused for breath, as well as for the duty of keeping his cigarette alight.

"Well, and isn't she quite right, too?" said Barty. "I've no great fancy for Father Greer, but that doesn't affect my feeling for the Church."

He rose, and resting his elbows on the window-sill, leaned out into the still air.

"By Jingo! You don't often see the beat o' that for a sky! Look at it, Larry. There's Orange and Green for you, if you like! God! I wish *we* could get them to work together like that!"

One of those transformation scenes that sometimes follow on an overcast and rainy day, was happening in the west. The sun had sunk behind the hills, the grey clouds had vanished; the higher heaven was green, clear and pale, but low in the west, long and fleecy rollers of golden cloud lay in a sea of burning orange.

At about the same time, the golden stream that had flowed so generously from Mrs. Mangan's purse, had failed, and Mrs. Mangan, her arms full of the fruit of those Christian

graces of Faith, Hope and Charity, that are indispensable to the success of a bazaar, was asking Evans to order for her her "caw," by which term she indicated the vehicle that had conveyed her to the scene of her triumph.

For it was evident to the meanest capacity that Mrs. Mangan had now paid her footing in society.

CHAPTER XIV

"Go away from me, Miss Christian!" shouted Mrs. Twomey (but this was merely an ejaculation of pleased surprise, not to be taken literally). "Go-to-God-he-did-not!"

"He did, indeed, Mrs. Twomey!" replied Christian, rooting at her habit pocket, and extracting her purse. "He said that he'd won the scholarship, and he knew you were praying hard for him or he wouldn't have got it, and he said I was to give you this, with his love."

"This" was a golden sovereign, a coin that did not often in its beauty and entirety come Mrs. Twomey's way.

She curtseyed so low that since—as has been said—she was but little over four feet, Christian had to lean low over Harry's withers in order to drop the sovereign into her hand.

"That the sun may shine on his soul, my lovely gentleman! That he may never want crown, pown', nor shi'n, nor you nayther! The Kingdom o' Heaven is your due, the pair of yee, and may yee be long going there! Amin!"

A silent and prayerful moment followed on the benedictions, and Mrs. Twomey's bright little eyes rolled devoutly heavenwards. This concession to the solemnity of the occation disposed of, the beneficiary became normal again.

"Look!" she resumed, while she bestowed the sovereign in an incredibly old bag-purse with a brass rim; "tell him there's always one foolish in a family, and what it is with Masther Larry, he's too give-ish! That's what he is!"

"You can tell him so yourself," replied Christian. "He'll be home in a week."

"Very good, faith! There's a welcome before him whatever time he'll come! Sure I thought he'd be kept back in England till the Christmas?"

"He's finished with school now," said Christian. "He's going abroad for a bit after Christmas, and then he's going to Oxford!"

The glory in Christian's voice conveyed more to Mrs. Twomey than any statement of fact could achieve.

"Well, well! I'm proud out of him, the poor child! But I wisht it was home in his own house he was to be," she replied, raising her skirt, and stuffing the purse into a large pocket that hung round her waist over a red flannel petticoat; "ha n't he lessons enought learnt?"

"Oh, but he *loves* going to Oxford, Mrs. Twomey," said Christian; "he's looking forward to it awfully; and *I'm* going to France to do lessons, too! I'll be talking French to you, Mrs. Twomey, when I come back!"

Mrs. Twomey uttered a screech of well-simulated horror.

"For God's sake, child, do not!" she exclaimed; "didn't I know one o' thim in Boyshton, a docther he was, and a German. He had as many slishes and sloshes as'd fill a book! Sure I thought I'd lose me life thrying could I make off at all what he said to me!"

"Well, I shall be slishing and sloshing to you when I come home, Mrs. Twomey!" said Christian, who was skilled in converse with such as Mrs. Twomey; "but it will be in French. I suppose you talked German to your Boston doctor?"

"H'th indeed! Little enough I said to him! I never had anny wish for thim docthors at all. Look at the little rakeen that's after gettin' the Dispinsary at Cunnock-a-Ceoil! Three hundred pound the father ped for it for him! A low, hungry little fella, that'd thravel the counthry for the sake of a ha'penny—God!"

The flow of Mrs. Twomey's eloquence ceased in shock, as Major Talbot-Lowry and Miss Coppinger emerged from the dairy behind her.

"Well, Mary," said Dick, "who is it who's so hard up for ha'pence?"

Mrs. Twomey's equanimity was not slow to re-establish

itself. She and the Major were "the one age," and they had grown up together.

"Why then, your Honour knows him well, and too well!" she snapped at him, looking up his long length to his handsome, good natured face, much as a minute female curdog might look and snap, presuming on her sex, at a Great Dane. "It's the new little docthor, Danny Aherne, that your Honour is afther putting in the Dispinsary!"

"Oh, that poor little fellow?" said Dick, laughing, but with a touch of discomposure; "*I* didn't put him there. What's the matter with him, any how? Why, he hasn't been at the job three months! Give the man time, Mary, give him time! I'll engage you'll all be in love with him by this time next year!"

Mrs. Twomey glanced at Miss Coppinger, and replied with decorous piety:

"God grant it!"

She then, with an admirable assumption of respect for her superiors, and zeal for her office, moved past her visitors into the dairy.

Dick Talbot-Lowry hesitated a moment or two, then he laughed again, and strode after her into the dark dairy; Miss Coppinger followed him. Mrs. Twomey, a tiny and almost imperceptible bundle, was already on her knees in a corner, scrubbing a glistening metal churn, and so engrossed in her task as to be unaware of her visitors.

"Look here, Mary," began the Major, with a touch of severity; "what's all this about Doctor Aherne?"

Mrs. Twomey rose from her knees, dried her little scarlet claws in her apron, and stood to attention. Having opened the debate by calling fervently upon her God to witness that she knew nothing of the matter, she proceeded, like a solo pianist, to run her fingers, as it were, lightly over the keys. Passing swiftly from her own birth, upbringing, invincible respectability, and remoteness from all neighbours, or knowledge of neighbours, she coruscated in a cadenza in which the families of Talbot-Lowry and Coppinger, and her devotion

to both, were dazzingly blended, and finished in a grand chord on the apparently irrelevant fact that she would die dead before she would put down any dirty stain before the Major's honour.

"But Mary," interposed Frederica, with an inartistic directness that was in painful contrast to the cadenza, "what has the Major got to say to Doctor Aherne?"

The question was ignored; the artist dashed on into a presto movement, in which, as far as any direct theme was discernible, Dr. Mangan, his cupidity, his riches, the riches of Dr. Aherne's parents were the leading motives. Also, parenthetically, that Danny Aherne was without shoe or stocking to his foot when he was going to school in Pribawn with her own poor little boy. "And look at him now!" continued Mrs. Twomey, on a high reciting note, and still presto, "with his car and his horse, and his coat with an owld cat skin for a collar on it, and his Tommy-shirts without tails!"

There was an instant of pause, and Frederica breathed the words "'Dicky' shirt-fronts!" to her bewildered cousin.

"Himself and the Big Docthor walking the streets of Cluhir like two paycocks!" went on Mrs. Twomey with ever-increasing speed and fury. "Ha! Ha! Didn't I meet him back in Pribawn ere yistherday. 'How great you are in yourself!' says I to him. 'It done *you* no harm to kill a woman!' says I. 'Mind your own business!' says he to me. 'Throth then, an' I *will* mind it!' says I, 'an' I'll have plenty to mind it without you! I'll have plenty to mind it without yourself! Dannileen alay!'"

"What on earth are you talking about?" Dick broke in impatiently.

Mrs. Twomey flung a glance to the doorway. Christian was no longer there. On a lower key, and directed to Miss Coppinger, a fresh stream flowed. A young woman had died; a young woman who had been privileged to marry a relative, of a degree of relationship obscure, but still honoured, of Mikey Twomey's; "and she afther having a young

son, and the boy that marrit her as proud!—and a very good baby, and what misfortune came to her no one'd know, only the Lord God Almighty, but she died on them. And she a fine, hard, hearty, blushy, big lump of a gerr'l. And 'tis true what they said——"

The details that followed were hissed, prestissimo, into the ear of Miss Coppinger, but that Dr. Aherne was to be blamed, was made as clear to Dick Talbot-Lowry as to his cousin.

The tale was concluded in tears.

"Look! I has to cry when I thinks of it!"

It is impossible with Mrs. Twomey, and her like, to argue a point, or to attempt an appeal to reason. A flat and dictatorial contradiction may have some temporary effect, and Major Talbot-Lowry adopted this method, for lack of better, in defence of his nominee. Mrs. Twomey, however, continued to weep.

"But Mary," urged Frederica, "there isn't a doctor in the world who doesn't lose a patient sometimes. It may not have been this unfortunate young man's fault in the least——"

"'Tisn't that I'm crying for at all," sobbed Mrs. Twomey, a deplorable little figure, her head bent down, while she wiped violently and alternately her nose and her eyes in her sacking apron. "But it is what the people is sayin' on the roads about" (sob) "about" (sniff)——

"About *what?*" said Dick, who was being bored.

"About your Honour!" returned Mrs. Twomey, in a sort of roar.

"And what the devil are they saying about me?"

"God forbid that I'd put down any dirty stain before your Honour," sobbed Mrs. Twomey, recurring to her earlier metaphor; "it's that big horse that ye're afther buyin' from Docthor Mangan; they say that he gave him to ye too cheap on the head of it——"

"On the head of what, woman?" shouted Dick, now passing, by the well-worn channel of anxiety, from boredom to anger.

"On the head of the Dispinsary! Sure they says 'twas your Honour gave it to Danny Aherne!"

It is unnecessary to record Major Talbot-Lowry's indignation on hearing this charge. The dairy, with its low ceiling and paven floor, echoed, submissively, his well-justified strictures on the lies and evil speaking of his humbler neighbours, and Mrs. Twomey dried her eyes (much as she would scrub out one of her milk-pans) and hearkened.

Who shall say if she believed him? There is a standard of honour, rigid and stern, for gentlemen, just as there is quite another standard for those who do not, in the opinion of a people, Austrian in their definition of what is or is not gentle birth, merit that title. Dick Talbot-Lowry was a gentleman, and, in her own words, no "dirty stain" would ever be attributed to him by Mary Twomey, but even she knew that the ethics of buying and selling a horse apply to no other transaction, and she knew also that in the disposal of a "place," more may occur than meets the eye. She resented the slur on her chieftain, but, in spite of her wrath, she could not feel quite certain that the accusation was entirely unfounded.

CHAPTER XV

THE town of Cluhir had more features than those that have already been enumerated, to entitle it to respect. There was, primarily, the great river, that moved majestically in its midst, bearing a church, impartially, on its either bank, and hiding and nourishing in its depths the salmon that gave the town its reason for existence. There was the tall and noble bridge that spanned the river, and joined the rival churches together (a feat of which it is safe to say no other power in Ireland was capable). It was made of that blue-grey limestone that builds bridges, and churches, and houses, with an equal success, and it was the equivalent of a profession for many of the inhabitants of the town, who were accustomed to spend long, meditative hours upon it, criticising the fishermen on the bank below, watching the fish, talking of fish, thinking of fish, without haste, and with a good deal of rest. There was also Hallinan's Hotel, that was very far from being a mere country hotel. The stately bow-windows of its coffee-room have already been mentioned, but its wide verandah must not be forgotten, stone-paven, glass-roofed, umbrageous with tropic vegetation, beneath whose shade, on the sunny days that are enjoyed by the lesser world of men, sad anglers, in ancient tweed suits, lolled, broken-heartedly, in basket-chairs. And, finally, on the town's highest level, was The Mall, reserved, dignified, with a double row of great beech-trees, and behind them, on both sides of the wide roadway, the reserved and dignified houses of the magnates of Cluhir. Eminent in both these qualities was No. 6; almost too much so, Mrs. Mangan thought sometimes. On a wet day she would say, it would

be as good for you to be in the Back of Beyond itself, as here, where you might be flattening your nose all day and not see as much as a bike going by.

Dr. Mangan, however, fully recognised the value of this seclusion. His surgery was at the back of the house, and its unbroken quiet was grateful to a man who had much to do, and plenty to think of. He was seated in it, one mild February evening, some months after the election of Dr. Aherne. It had been market-day in Cluhir; patients had been many, and fees satisfactory. The Doctor reclined in front of a good turf and wood fire, and smoked a mellow pipe, and reviewed the run of events. Danny Aherne had been in, to speak to him about a case, that afternoon, and Dr. Mangan's thoughts ran back to that little affair of the Knock Ceoil Dispensary, and of Major Talbot-Lowry's part in the matter. Danny had just nipped in before the Local Government Bill took the power away from the old Dispensary Committees. Dam' luck for Danny. The Major had been useful enough. It hadn't been his vote, so much as his influence, that had got the boy the job. The affair, as far as the Doctor was concerned, was of quite minor importance, but it had been useful in promoting the feeling of intimacy between the houses of Mangan and Talbot-Lowry. That omniscient composite authority, "The people on the roads," whose views had been quoted by Mrs. Twomey, had not been wrong in hinting that the Doctor had permitted the Major to have the best of the bargain about the big brown horse. Old Tom Aherne had made it well worth his while to do so, so everyone had come comfortably out of the transaction. Nor had Dr. Mangan, in diagnosing Major Talbot-Lowry, been wrong in his assumption that Dick, generous, and elated by his success in bargaining, would wish to indemnify his opponent for having had the worst of it, and would consider the support of Danny Aherne as a suitable expression of the wish.

The Big Doctor's intimacy with Dick had progressed of late with remarkable rapidity. During one of those friendly

talks over the Mount Music library fire, that had latterly been recurring with increasing frequency, an opportunity had risen for the Doctor—"a warm man," as has been said—to offer to the Major a tangible proof of his friendship.

"After all, there's the money lying idle at my bank," the Doctor had said, breezily.

Dick, in a moment of irritation and perplexity, had expatiated on the expenses consequent on launching sons into professions, and also on the pig-headed determination of annuitants to "hang on," regardless of the inconveniences occasioned to a heavily burdened property by this want of consideration.

"Three half-sisters of my father's," says Dick, "as old as three men each of 'em, and not a notion of dying among 'em! They'll see *me* out, I'll swear!"

It was then that that idle money had been tactfully referred to.

"I'll knock better interest out of you, Major, than the bank'll give me!" said the Big Doctor, jovially. "I want no security from *you!* Your word——"

"Oh, that will never do, my dear fellow," Dick had replied, as he was meant to reply. "Of course it must be a *pukka* business deal. I'll give you——"

In his relief, Dick was ready to give to this kind William of Deloraine any security that he would suggest. It was, of course, a purely nominal affair—but still—what about a mortgage on the house and demesne? How would that do?

The Doctor thought it would do very well.

It should be established, while it was still possible to induce the reader to accept such a statement, that the Big Doctor was, as he himself might have said, "not too bad a fellow altogether!" In public life, a fighter, wily and skilled; compassionate to the poor, yet exacting, implacably, practical recognition of his compassion. In his own house, easy-going and autocratic; in his Church, a slave; a confidential slave, whose gladiatorial gifts were valued, and whose idiosyncracies might be humoured, but none the less, a slave. He

was like an elephant in his hugeness, and suppleness, his dangerousness, and his gentleness. His head was not crowned with the bald benevolence that an elephant wears, but seated on his neck was a mahout, and the mahout was Father Greer, the Parish Priest of Cluhir.

Now, on this quiet evening, he sat and smoked by the fire, and, touching "the tender stops of various quills," his eager thought paused longest on the note that stood for Tishy. Tishy was, in her own way, as sound an asset as any that he possessed, a thoroughly well-made article, a right-down handsome girl, the Big Doctor thought complacently, good enough for any position, and for any man.

"But she's not for any man, I can tell them!" thought Tishy's father; "that's just where the difference of it is! I'll see to that, you may take your oath!"

Then he began to consider his son. He could not feel the same confidence in Barty that Tishy inspired. Where Barty got hold of all his dam-silly notions was more than anyone, least of all his father, could imagine. Nevertheless, they had had their uses, and might still justify themselves "in a sense," he thought; "if not in one way, maybe in another." He moved on to his wife. How could she contribute to the Great Ideas? Ideas were not much in her line, but if you told her what to do, she'd do it. After all, that was the main thing. Women's own notions were often more bother than they were worth. Poor Annie! His big mouth, under the coarse black moustache, spread into a smile, and his blue-grey eyes smiled with it. "I was a fool once about her, and b' Jove, I think I'm not much better now!" he said to himself, indulgently. The handsomest woman this minute in the barony, and she had never so much as looked crooked at any man since the day he married her. After all, she had been a credit at that Mount Music show. There wasn't a woman to touch her in the place; she had held her own with them; she had spent his money as he had told her to spend it. Like a lady. "I like that; how much? Here's your money!" That was what he had told

her to say, and she had said it all right. No damned huxterings. And those women whom he wished her to get on with, she *had* got on with. They liked her. It was easy to see that; and Lady Isabel had often come in to see her since the show, and had stayed for tea, as friendly as you please. Annie was all right.

The gossip of Cluhir had been as mistaken in the matter of the Mangans as gossip often is. Francis Mangan had married his wife for the entirely unjudicious reason that her beauty had mastered his common sense. After his marriage his common sense, having regained the upper hand, was satisfied that, even though her

> "Charms were to change by to-morrow
> And fleet in his arms,"

she would still be the only wife in the world for him. None the less he did not pretend indifference to the knowledge that his wife was the handsomest woman in Cluhir, and there was, indeed, no reason why he should do so. And thus the Big Doctor had a double triumph.

There came a fumbling tap on the door, it opened a little, and Hannah's head came twisting round it.

"Docthor!" spoke the head, like a Teraph, "the Misthress says to have ye come in. The supper's ready, and the priest is in it."

This remarkable statement was accepted by the Doctor with composure, as expressing the fact that Father Greer had arrived.

"Tell her I'm coming this minute," he said, rising ponderously to his feet; "say to them to go down without me."

He locked up the fees that were lying on the table, being a careful man, and washed his huge, pale hands with the particularity that a doctor brings to that task. Huge though they were, they had the sensitiveness that is the gift of music, and is also part of the endowment of the surgeon.

"Ah, here he is now!" said Mrs. Mangan, as the Doctor

came, enormously, into the small dining-room. "For shame for you, Francis, to be so late."

"Ah, don't scold him, Mrs. Mangan!" said the priest simpering conventionally. "Wasn't it ministering to the afflicted that delayed him! Doctors mustn't be subjected to the rules that bind ordinary people!"

"That's right, Father," said the Doctor, beginning to carve a large, cold goose, with the skill that his trade bestows; "stand up for me now! Don't let her bully me—though indeed I might be used to it by this time!"

"Doesn't he look like it, the poor fella!" scoffed Mrs. Mangan, directing a melting look at her husband; "starved and pairsecuted! That's what he is!"

Father Greer smiled permissively over the rim of his glass of whisky and water; it was strong and good, and the food was good also, and abundant. Mrs. Mangan's suppers were as generous as her own contours, and were noted for their excellence. She herself was not so much to the priest's taste. He was celibate by nature as well as by profession. Women were antagonistic to him, and Mrs. Mangan, godly matron though she was, seemed to him to symbolize a very different ordering of life to that which he approved; but the Big Doctor was an asset of the Church who must be simpered upon, and for whose sake a little social boredom must be unrepiningly endured. He was an older man, by a good many years, than the Doctor, and was nearer sixty than fifty, but his figure was slight and active, and his scant hair was dark and silky, though there was a light dust of grey in it over the ears, which were thin and outstanding, and shared with his nostrils and eyelids the tinge of red that was denied to the rest of his face. He had the wide, brains-carrying forehead of a fox, as well as a fox's narrow jaw, but his eyes were small and black, and as quick as a bird's.

Barty and Tishy, who were not agreed in many things, were agreed in being afraid of him. They sat in perfect silence, while their mother occupied herself with directions to Hannah, who hovered, indeterminately, near the door, and

their father discoursed the visitor. Father Greer was something of a traveller, and he was now giving an instructive account of a recent visit to Switzerland, and of the "winter sports" that had occupied the energies of all in the hotel save himself.

"I found the air as bracing and as serviceable to me as you had led me to expect," he said to his host, "but the sports seemed to me to make a toil of pleasure, and the dancing that went on every night—'twas impossible to sleep! Well! Youthful frivolity, I suppose, must be condoned, but I may say I was greatly annoyed at an incident that occurred at a neighbouring hotel. Mostly English, the visitors were, and they held a Protestant service on Sunday in the sallermongy."

Barty looked secretly at his sister. His expression said: "And why shouldn't they?"

Father Greer ignored the look, and continued his recital: "As was quite right and proper for them to do."

There was a blink of the black eyes, and Barty recognised that he had not been unobserved.

"There was what is called a Reading-party of young min, with a tutor, at the hotel," went on the priest. "Protestants they were—so far as they had any religion—but only wun of them attended that service. It was said he was the wun and only person able to play the piano in the hotel. Some English ladies requested him to play—I believe there was some very unsuitable joking about it—and he consented. He attended that service; he played their English hymns," Father Greer paused, and gathered up the table with a glance before his climax. "That young man, I regret to say, was an Irish Catholic, one whom you all know—young Mr. St. Lawrence Coppinger!"

Mrs. Mangan, who had been too much harassed by Hannah's failure to decode her signals, to attend, heard the name only, and said lovingly:

"The dear boy! How nice for him and you to meet so far away from home, Father!"

Barty's satisfaction at his mother's unexpected comment took the form of kicking his sister, heavily. Tishy, who sang in the chapel choir, and was at this time inclined to regard herself as a pillar of the Church, returned the kick with a viciousness that indicated a hostile point of view, and said loftily:

"But to think they'd ask him! The English are very lax. Don't you think so, Father?"

Dr. Mangan laughed apologetically.

"Well, it's a wonder that a party of sheep would let a poor goat into their fold at all!" he said, in a voice that asked for forgiveness for the erring goat. "I suppose the young ladies got him in a corner, and 'twas hard for him to refuse. You'd hardly blame him for that!"

Father Greer looked bleakly down his nose and said nothing.

Barty scowled, considering that his hero stood in no need of apology. Dr. Mangan continued his endeavour to save the situation.

"But there's no understanding of Protestants!" he resumed, good-humouredly; "I met an old fellow on the train th' other day, old William Henderson of Glen Brickeen, and he was telling me of a row he had with his clergyman, the Reverend Wilson. 'Oh,' says he, 'I gave up going to church on the head of it!' 'And isn't that a great sin for you,' says I, 'to give up going to church?' 'Oh,' says he, 'I explain that to God every Saturday. He understands well what Mr. Wilson done to me, and why I wouldn't go to church as long as he was in it.' 'Maybe,' said I, funning him, 'some day he might be before you in Heaven with his story, and what'll you do then?' 'Oh,' said he, 'I'll make out a place for myself, never fear! There's places of all sorts in it!' says he. 'I suppose it's the many mansions you're thinking of!' said I. 'You think the poor Roman Catholics don't know their Bibles, but I know that much!'"

"Well, Francis," said Mrs. Mangan, admiringly, "I never

knew you that you'd be without an answer, no matter what anyone'd say to you! 'Many mansions,' says you! I declare I'd never have thought of that! Father, wouldn't you say he answered him well!"

Father Greer, having made his point, smiled indulgently, and, as he was deeply involved in a mouthful of tough goose, the smile, blended with the act of mastication, made him look more than ever like a fox, a fox in a trap, gnashing at his captors.

"I always knew the Doctor could be trusted to 'give a knave an answer,' as Shakespeare says," he said, when the power of speech was restored to him; "I'm often surprised at the liberty, I might almost say the licence, that is met with in Protestants in connection with their religion. Take the case of young Mr. Coppinger that I was speaking of. That was a melancholy instance of evil communications corrupting good manners. I may say that I regard with anxiety a too great freedom, what I may call an unrestrained intercourse, between members of the two churches—that is, indeed, if I am justified in describing as a church that which I have heard stigmatised as 'a fortuitous concourse of atheistic atoms'!"

Father Greer's nose came down over his upper lip, the corners of his mouth went up, and a succession of sniffs indicated that he was laughing.

"That may be rather severe," he conceded, "but I may say that, for my part, I consider that Catholics have a sufficiency of pleasing society within their own communion, without striving to go beyond it!"

Father Greer paused, looked round the table as if to receive the general assent, and put his sharp nose into the tumbler of brown whisky and water, to whose replenishing the Doctor had not failed to attend.

A rather stricken silence followed. Mrs. Mangan's large and handsome brown eyes turned guiltily to her husband, and moved on from his face to one of the many trophies of

the Mount Music Sale, a Protestant chair back, now flaunting itself on a Catholic chair, under the very eyes of the Parish Priest!

Barty glowered at his plate; Tishy, who had not enjoyed herself at the Sale, felt, in consequence, that she was now justified in doing so at the expense of her family, and held up her head, and looked at her father. It was plain to see that the elephant had felt the prick of the Mahout's *ankus*. The Big Doctor's face was perturbed. Tishy saw him look at the little priest's glass, and knew that he wished it were empty, in order that he might pour into it a propitiatory oblation. He cleared his throat once or twice before he spoke.

"Very true, Father, very true. I used to think the same thing in England. The chaps I used to meet there—no one would know what religion they belong to, no more than if they were heathens. That young lad that you weren't pleased with—young Coppinger—I believe he's as good a Catholic as any of us, but he happens to be thrown mostly among Protestants. I often think it's no more than our duty as Catholics to try and see as much as we can of him. He and Barty here, got to be very great with each other the time he was with us, but it's only an odd time now that we get a sight of him."

"I was talking to him a long while, the last time he was home," said Barty, looking up, with something smouldering in his voice, "he told me he was going to Oxford next October. It's well to be him!" he ended defiantly.

"Now, I wouldn't be too sure of that at all!" said Father Greer, with a smoothness that implied the laying aside of the *ankus*; "I think, my young friend, that your good father's house is as safe and happy a place for you as you could wish for!" He turned to the Doctor. "I may say that there is a belief among certain classes that no one is properly edjucated without they've been sent to England. I thought my friend Barty, was a better Irishman than it seems he is!"

"I'm as good an Irishman as any man!" said Barty, in a sudden blaze, "and may-be better than some!"

His face had turned white, and his eyes, that were as large and dark as his mother's, met those of Father Greer with the courage of anger.

"What harm is it to want to get a better education than what I have? I don't see why I shouldn't want to go to Oxford, or Switzerland either, for the matter o' that—as well as another!"

Father Greer, as Dr. Mangan remarked subsequently, took Barty's making a fool of himself very well. He put his head on one side, his black eyebrows went up, and he again uttered that succession of sniffs that served him for a laugh.

"It seems that I have made a railing accusation without meaning it, and brought down fire from heaven, like the Prophet Elijah, only to find that I am myself to forrum the burnt offering!" he said, pleasantly. "Well, well, Barty, don't consume me entirely in your just indignation, and I'll promise you to make no insinuendoes in future as to whether you're a good or bad Irishman!"

I am unable to determine if Father Greer deliberately devised this felicitous amalgamation of the two words that were in his mind, or if it was unintentional, and an indication that Barty's brief flare of revolt had flustered him a little. I am inclined to the latter theory. In any case, the word is a useful one.

CHAPTER XVI

CHRISTIAN was in the kennels, in their innermost depths. She was, in fact, seated on the bench of "the ladies" lodging-house, on the dry and rustling cushion of bracken on which Major Talbot-Lowry bedded his pack.

Yearning to her, sitting all over her, covering her with their ponderous affection, were the hounds. Two large ladies had each a head on each of her shoulders; two more had laid their chins on her knees, and were gazing raptly into her face. The less favoured stood, and squeezed, and pushed, and panted, with glowing eyes and waving sterns, in as close a circle round her as it was possible to form.

"Dearest things!" apostrophised Christian, "I feel like Nero—I wish you had only one lovely head, so that I might kiss you all at once!"

"Rot!" said Larry, who was leaning against the wall, facing her, and saying: "Down, you brute!" at intervals, to hounds, who, having failed to force their way to Christian, were directing their attention to him, to the detriment of his grey flannel trousers. "And look at your dress from their filthy paws!"

"Good Gawd, Mr. Larry Sir! Don't say paws! 'Ounds 'ave *feet,*" responded Christian, whose imitation of Cottingham was no less accurate now than it had been some eight years earlier; "and I don't care a pin for this old skirt anyway——"

"I'm as fond of hounds as anyone," said Larry, reprovingly, "but I must say I should draw the line at their licking my face!"

"They don't!" said Christian, indignantly; "that's the beauty of them. They never lick—except perhaps my

darling Nancy, because I nursed her when she had pneumonia."

"If I were you, Cottingham, I wouldn't let Miss Christian into the kennels," said Larry, with severity, "she makes lap-dogs of the hounds!"

Cottingham had joined the party, and was leaning on the half-door of the kennel, watching his hounds with the never-failing interest of a good kennel-huntsman.

"I couldn't be too 'ard on Miss Christeen, sir," replied Cottingham; "her's the best walk I have. That there Nancy was a sickly little thing enough when I sent 'er to Miss Christeen, and look at 'er now! A slapping fine bitch!"

Christian turned a slow and expressionless eye upon her accuser, indicating triumph.

"It's like this with that Nancy," continued Cottingham, with whom the preaching habit, fostered by years of laying down the law on subservient fields, was inveterate. "Her got that fond of Miss Christeen, her follered 'er about, the way the ole lamb followed Mary, as they say. And that artful she got! Wouldn't try a yard! An' she' ad the 'ole o' the young entry like 'erself. Any sort of a check, and back they all comes an' looks at me, wi' their 'eads a one side, and their sterns agoin' like this," he wagged a stubby fore-finger to and fro in so precisely the right rhythm, that, stubby as it was, no magic wand could evolve more instantly the scene to be presented; "an' that's 'ow it'd be, th'old 'ounds workin' 'ard, and the young uns lookin' like they 'as nothin' to do only admire of me!"

"Quite right, too!" truckled Christian.

"Ah, Miss Christeen, I'm too used to soft soap, I am!"

"Well, you know, Cottingham, it was *I* cured Nancy when she took to following *me* about." She turned to Larry. "Luckily, I broke my wrist, and by the time I was able to ride again she had given me up and taken to hunting."

"That's what you says, Miss," said Cottingham; "but I reckon what her wanted was what her got from *me*—a good 'idin'!"

Having made his point, Cottingham, a true artist, departed at the little toddling run that in kennels indicates devotion to duty, combined with a slippery floor.

"I had forgotten about your breaking your wrist—I remember about my own, right enough!" said Larry. "What rotten luck!"

"Oh, it's dead sound now," said Christian. "Look!" She stood up, and held out both her slender hands to him across the intervening hounds' backs. "I bet you don't know which is which!"

Larry took a hand in each of his, and flexed the wrists. "The left, wasn't it?" he said, without releasing them. "Not that I see any difference, only I remember now that I heard you had smashed the same one that I did."

"It did hurt—horribly! I expect you know. It hurts still a little, sometimes." She looked at him for sympathy. She was nearly eighteen now, and had caught him up in height, so that her brown eyes looked straight into his blue ones.

"Poor little paw!" said Larry patronizingly; he was going to be twenty-one in a week, and felt immeasurably older than Christian. "Oh, by the way, I forgot! I mustn't say paw. Must I call it 'foot'? I'll make it well, anyhow!" he ended, and, in what he felt to be the manner of a kind uncle, he kissed the injured wrist.

"*Quite* well now, thank you!" said Christian, mockingly, withdrawing her hands. "If I had only thought of it, I could have got Nancy to lick it! It might have done just as well!" Her colour had risen a little. "Let's come out; it's rather stuffy in here."

At a little distance from the kennel precincts were waiting two small, smooth, white dogs, daughters of the adored companions of Christian's childhood, themselves scarcely less adored than were their parents. Seated, as was their practice, in a well-chosen position, that combined seclusion with a commanding view of the detested hounds, they had not ceased (as was also their practice) from loud and desolate barking, an exercise that in the case of Dooley, the younger

and more highly-strung of the couple, was accustomed to develop into a sustained contralto wail. As Christian and Larry left the kennel yard, this moment had been reached. Dooley's nose was in the air, her mouth was as round as the neck of a bottle, her white throat looked as long as a swan's throat, and the bark was softening into sobs. Christian flung herself down, and gathered her and her sister, the second Rinka, into her arms.

"Let's sit down here," she said, sending her hat spinning down the grassy slope; "it's too lovely to go in, and I want a cigarette."

"Haven't got one," said Larry. "Sorry. I gave them up in Lent, and now I'm doing as well without 'em."

"Nerve gone already," said Christian. "That's what comes of missing a season!" She laughed up at him.

"Don't know," said Larry, dropping down beside her on the dry, sun-hot grass; "quite likely; but it wasn't that. The fact was"—he hesitated—"I met a very decent Padre at Mürren. We used to talk a lot about—oh, no end of things! When he found I was Irish he was awfully pleased. He congratulated me on belonging to the Old Faith—he's Irish himself, but he's never lived over here. He said it was such a wonderful link with the people and the past—such a romantic religion! And so it is, you know. It hadn't struck me, somehow, till Father Nugent talked of it. I'm sorry for you, Christian! Don't you feel being a Protestant is a bit—well—stodgy—and respectable—no sort of poetry?"

"I like stodge," said Christian, serenely.

Larry paid this frivolity no attention. He had only recently discovered that he possessed a soul, and he was as much pleased with it as he had been with his first watch, and he found much the same enjoyment in producing and examining it, that had been afforded to him by the watch.

"It was Father Nugent's suggestion to give up smoking," he said, unable to eliminate from his voice a touch of pride,

"I knocked off whiskies and sodas, too—but that was off my own bat."

"'Smite them by the merit of the Lenten Fast!'" murmured Christian. Unlike Larry, she evaded personalities and especially those that involved a discussion of religion. "Larry, do you remember the awful rags we used to have over that hymn! What ages it is since you were at home! Not since I've had my hair up!"

"By Jove, I hardly knew you when I saw you first!" responded Larry, his sails filling on a fresh tack with characteristic speed. "It's not as light as it used to be. I'm not sure that I like it up."

He looked at her critically. Her hair, thick and waving, lay darkly on her forehead, and was stacked in masses upon her small head on a system known only to herself.

"That's a pity," said Christian, coolly, "and I hate it, too. But unluckily, whether you and I hate it or not, it's got to stay up now—that's to say, when it will. I am supposed to be 'out.' I'm nearly eighteen, you know. I never thought I'd live to such an age."

"Oh, wait till you're 'of age,' like me!" said Larry, impressively. "Then you'll know the horrors of longevity I've got to take over the show—the tenants and all the rest of it—from your father, and Aunt Freddy, next week! An awful job it's going to be! Cousin Dick says that these revisions of rent have played the deuce all round. I shall make old Barty Mangan my agent. He's a solicitor now all right. He can run the show. I like old Barty, don't you?"

"I hardly ever see him," said Christian, cautiously. "He has rather nice looks—more like a poet than a solicitor."

"You see, I want to go abroad, and do some music, and paint," said Larry, pressing on with his own subject. "Take painting on seriously, you know——"

"I know," said Christian, thoughtfully, "I don't envy Barty Mangan! I know Papa's having botheration with our people——"

"All the more reason for me to earn my living by painting!" responded Larry cheerfully.

They were sitting at the edge of a patch of plantation. It was the middle of May, and the young larches behind them were clad in a cloud of pale emerald; the clumps of hawthorn, that were dotted about the park, between the kennels and the river, were sending forth the fragrance of their whiteness; the new green had come into the grass, though it was almost smothered in the snow of daisies; primroses and wild hyacinths had strayed from the little wood, and straggling down the hillside, had joined hands and agreed, the first, to linger, the latter, to hasten into blow, and so to share the month between them. Just below, on the turn of the hill, was a big thicket of furze bushes, more golden than gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. From Larry's woods across the Ownashee, the cuckoo's voice came, as melodiously monotonous and as full of associations as the bell of a village church. Silvery clouds were sailing very high in a sky of thinnest, sweetest blue; little jets of sparkling sound, rising and falling in it, bespoke the invisible, rapturous larks, tireless as a playing fountain; and the sun blazed down on the boy and the girl and the two little dogs seated there in the full of it.

Larry rolled over and over on the grass like a young colt.

"Oh, murder-in-Irish!" he groaned, in sheer ecstasy, "isn't it gorgeous! I always forget how entirely stunning Ireland is, till I come back to it!"

He could say no more, as both dogs had sprung from Christian's arms, and were feverishly licking his face.

"Your own fault!" said Christian, answering his expostulations. "Kind little things, they thought you asked for it."

"I repeat," said Larry, lying on his back, and holding off his assailants with difficulty, "eliminating badly brought-up dogs, that Ireland is the finest country in the world, and—listen to this, Christian!—the Irish are the finest people, *and* the worst governed!"

"'The foinest pisanthry in Europe'!" said Christian, in gibing exaggeration. "Larry, you've got awfully English!"

Larry rolled over and came into play again, sitting bolt upright; "I'm a Home Ruler!"

"Don't be absurd," said Christian, tranquilly.

"I'm not the least absurd," returned Larry. "I *mean* it. If not a Republican!" he added, ostentatiously, and began to chant:

"And Ireland shall be free,
"From the centre to the sea,
"And huzza for Libertee,
"Says the Shan Van Voght!"

"I say, you remember the old companions of Finn? Well, they're rolling up again! I've started them at Oxford. Six members already! Two men in my college, and——"

"English, of course!" interrupted Christian, with an effective tone of elderly superiority. "People like yourself, who know nothing about it!"

This was an insult not easily to be tolerated; the gage of battle did not lie long at Larry's feet, and it may be admitted that the challenger would have been ill pleased had it been ignored.

In the five years that had passed since the curtain of this narrative went down on Christian, she had changed more than had Larry. It was as though that extra-worldly endowment of her childhood having ceased to manifest in external ways, had turned its light inwards. The power of hearing what others could not hear, had faded, but a subtlety of mind, a clarity, a sort of pondering, intellectual self-consciousness (that had no kinship with that other form of self-consciousness that is only inverted self-conceit) had taken the place of those voices that she had once refused to deny to the inquisitorial John.

The battle, with regard to the resurrected Companions of Finn, having waxed and waned in a course that need not here be followed, the argument took on another phase.

"You know, Larry," Christian said, half-absently twisting and arranging Dooley's little tan ears, in order to express, on Dooley's behalf, with them, various emotions, "it seems to me that all these political revolutions that you are so anxious to start, for the good of Ireland, are like putting the cart before the horse."

"What do you mean?" asked Larry, eyeing her with undisguised surprise.

"Well," said Christian, slowly, gazing across the valley with eyes more than ever like the clearest brown stream, "you've got to begin with the individual. After all, Ireland is made up of individuals, and each of them contributes in some way to the big result. It seems to me that the real Spirit of the Nation is—is——"

Her gaze at the far woods became fixed, and her hands ceased to play with the soft, tan ears.

"Is what?" said Larry, rather impatiently. He was bewildered by this grave, young debater, and was trying to reconcile her with the child he had left behind him last year, or even with the child who, five minutes ago, had wished to impress a comprehensive kiss on all the hounds at once. Moreover, a young gentleman on the imminent verge of official manhood, is justified in resenting ideas, in opposition to his own, being offered to him by a little girl, with her hair only just "up," whom he regards as no more than a niece, or thereabouts.

"Well," said Christian, still more slowly, her eyes lifting from the woods and resting on a shining snowball of a cloud, "it's Religious Intolerance, I think! That seems to me the Spirit of the Nation—my side as bad as yours, and yours as bad as mine——"

"Oh, the parsons and the priests," said Larry, airily. "Oh you wait, Christian! You don't know! You've been stuck down here in a hole. If you met Father Nugent——"

"But I don't mean them only," said Christian, standing to her guns; "I mean the individual—you and me! Just anybody—we're all the same. The Shan van Voght has got

to free us from each other before she takes on England!" She looked at Larry; the seriousness left her face, and she shook back the dark hair from her forehead with just the same gay, mutinous toss of the head that a young horse will give when the rider picks up the reins. "I may have been stuck down here in a hole!" said Christian, mocking him; "but anyhow, I haven't lived in England and lost my eye!"

"What about seeing from a distance, and seeing the whole and not the part?" retorted Larry. "What about a bird's eye view?" He had risen to his feet and was looking down at her, feeling the moral support of physical elevation.

"That depends on the bird!" said Christian. "Now, if it were a goose, for example! Like—— Hi! Dogs! Look, Larry! Look! Down by the furze bushes! A *huge* rabbit!"

The discussion closed abruptly, as such discussions will, when the disputants are at the golden age, and views and opinions are winged, and have not yet become ballast, or, which is worse, turned to mooring-stones.

CHAPTER XVII

THE origin of the Coppinger's Court picnic was complicated and has remained obscure. Whether its author had been Mrs. Mangan, or her friend, Mrs. Whelply, or young Mr. Coppinger himself, was uncertain, but the fact remained that a picnic, with indirect reference to the blossoming of the bluebells (*i.e.*, the wild hyacinths) was decided upon, and that Larry, in the course of the visit that he never failed to pay to the Mangan household, had placed the demesne of Coppinger's Court at the disposal of the ladies of Cluhir, as a scene for the entertainment.

Larry's fidelity to the Mangans was a matter that was undoubtedly something of a trial to his Aunt Freddy. She was too inflexibly conscientious to attempt to deny, even to Lady Isabel, still less to herself, that such fidelity was creditable, but she felt justified in considering it superfluous; when, as now, it took the form of inviting a party of unknown size, under the patronage of Mrs. Mangan, to accept the Ownashee as its washpot, and (as it were) to cast forth its shoe over Coppinger's Court, Aunt Freddy may be forgiven the manœuvre that arranged a *séance* with her Dublin dentist for the date decided upon for the picnic, and may be felt to deserve the sympathy of those who can appreciate the inwardness of her position. And this last, improbable though it may seem to some people, was made immensely more difficult by the simple and irrelevant fact that she, on Sundays, betook herself to the Knock Ceoil Protestant church, while Larry went to the white chapel on the hill. It was to the grey, stone Protestant church that Larry's forbears had gone for one hundred and fifty years or more, even since the then

reigning Coppinger had fallen in love with an English heiress, and, agreeing with Henri Quatre, that Paris was well worth a Mass, had 'verted to marry her. Never in living memory had the congregations that filled full the white chapel on the hill, included in their dutiful ranks any being of higher degree than might have been found in those other congregations, that, some nineteen hundred years earlier, were gathered in the hills of Galilee; those humble crowds who came to hear Christ preach, of whom it was said that they were of the common people, and that they heard Him gladly. Miss Frederica was as good a Christian—in some ways probably a better one—as might have been found in the white chapel, but it was impossible for her not to feel, what was, indeed, felt, with a singular mixture of satisfaction and disapproval, by the majority of the white chapel's congregation, that Larry's parents had, socially, been ill-advised when they "made a Roman of him." In the creed of Mary Twomey, and her fellows, it was only in conformity with natural law in the spiritual world that ginthry should go to church, and the like of herself to chapel. She, no more than Frederica, could subdue the feeling of incongruity imparted by the fact of Master Larry and herself worshipping together; it was as though, if she had run into the kitchen to get a sup of hot water, or the wetting of her mouth o' tay, she had found him sitting among the maids in the servants' hall. Mary Twomey, and her fellows, would have indignantly repudiated the idea of taking service with one of their own church. "No! Thank God! I never sank to that!" Mary had once said, when such had been imputed to her. There was no question of religion in it. Merely of fitness. So inveterate in the older Ireland is, or was, what Christian might have considered to be the outcome of The Spirit of the Nation, but that, in this special connection, may with, perhaps, greater accuracy, be ascribed to the aristocratic instinct.

Something like a sheet of thin ice had come into existence between Larry's life and that of his aunt. It had come gradually, almost imperceptibly. There had been a time,

after his First Communion, when Larry had confided in Frederica. He had even told her of the anxieties he had felt before his first Confession, and of how difficult he had found it to decide upon the sins that he could, without arrogance lay to his own charge. He told her that he had invented several crimes, in order to dignify the occasion. Frederica wondered secretly how that charming Jesuit Father, to whom, at Monkshurst, she had been introduced as her nephew's spiritual director, had dealt with the sinner; but this, Larry had not divulged. There were, from that time forward, an increasing number of things that Larry did not divulge to his Aunt Freddy, and the sheet of ice slowly became thicker. It was "the religious aspect of the case," as Miss Coppinger complained to Mr. Fetherston, that made it so impossible for her to speak her mind to Larry about the Mangans.

"Do you remember you advised us to send him to Oxford?" she reproached him. "I'm afraid it has only had the effect of making him take his religion more seriously—for which, I suppose, one *ought* to be thankful——"

"And why not?" the Reverend Charles had replied. "They say all roads lead to Rome, so no doubt the converse holds good, and out of Rome some road must lead to Heaven!"

The Reverend Charles was pleased with his aphorism, but Frederica could not enjoy it. Not even Mr. Fetherston could console her on this matter.

"His very niceness and simplicity make him a prey for undesirables," she mourned, "and he has that peculiar gift of making every one fond of him. I suppose it is his looks——"

"Then you cannot blame the undesirables," her rector responded.

Larry's looks had, certainly, a spell that was something in excess of what may be called their "face-value." Though legal manhood was so soon to be his status, he had still some of the radiance of childhood about him. His hair was of the

same pure and infantine gold that it had been when he charged down on the Eldest Statesman on the stepping-stones of the Ownashee; his blue eyes had lost none of their candour; the touch of gilding on his upper lip was effective only at short range, but, when taken in connection with a very white and even set of teeth, and a beaming and ever-ready smile, it carried considerable weight. His fair skin had not yet taken on its summer scorch of carmine, and its soft and babyish pinkness softened the salience of his short nose, and induced the critic to condone the want of decision in his chin.

"Not a *handsome* boy, exactly," people said, "but," and here people would smile relentingly, "if he had been a girl, one would certainly *quite* have said 'pretty'—so attractive-looking, and so—so clean!" which might seem to be the condemnation of faint praise, but was, in reality, merely the tribute that Larry's new-minted golden-ness of aspect startled from the beholder.

He was no more than five foot nine in height, which was a trial that at times he felt deeply, but there are practical advantages for a young man who rides, in being able to do so at something considerably under eleven stone. At boxing, rowing, and games, what he lost in weight and reach, he made up for in speed and elasticity and endurance. Finally, it may be said that his figure had the gift of making old clothes like new, and new clothes look unaggressive, and when to these attributes is added a faculty for wearing hunting kit with accuracy and finish, it will be understood that Larry had early achieved standing in his college.

The Cluhir picnic, that had so justifiably perturbed Miss Frederica, debouched, like a mighty river, from its wagonettes and outside cars, upon the lawns of Coppinger's Court, at about four of the clock, of a beautiful, balmy May afternoon, and to Larry fell the task of deciding upon its course of procedure. Clad in very white flannels and a prismatic blazer, and looking, as his most tepid supporter would have to allow, a picture of cleanliness, he advanced upon Mrs.

Mangan's wagonette, and proffered an arm, fortunately of steel, to facilitate her descent. The five years that had elapsed since Larry was her guest, had effected less change in her than in him. Save that the bisonian fringe now held a grey hair or two in its dark depths, and the curves, that had suggested a Chesterfield sofa to her young friend, were now something more opulent than they had been, Mrs. Mangan's progress along the corridor of eternity had made no perceptible mark on her. Still, in assisting her descent from a high wagonette, an arm of steel was not out of place.

Larry was at the age that, believing itself critical to the point of extinction of the rejected, yet accepts with enthusiasm any female creature that can wear a smart hat with assurance, and wag a flattering tongue with address. The Cluhir ladies were proficient in these arts. Mr. Coppinger was congratulated on his weather; arranged by his skill, poured forth of his benevolence! On his demesne, so green with young leaves, so gay with spring flowers! Kind Mr. Coppinger to have created them in such profusion! And what warmth was there in the Coppinger's Court sun! The second rate luminary dedicated to Cluhir was no more than a candle to it! Mr. Coppinger's Ant was enquired for (this, it should, perhaps, be explained, referred to Frederica, and had no entomological application) suitable regrets at her absence from home were expressed, with a delicate implication that with such a host, and in such weather, the loss was the Ant's, and was practically negligible, so far as the ladies of Cluhir were concerned. And who were these, coming up the path from Mr. Coppinger's lovely river? Ah, yes, the youngest Miss Talbot-Lowry, of course, and which brother was it? Oh, the youngest one? Mrs. Cassidy had thought the youngest of Lady Isabel's family was a twins—or *were* a twins? Which ought she to say?

"Well, this is half of it, anyhow!" says young Mr. Coppinger, facetiously, with which Mrs. Cassidy, like the Miss Flamboroughs, thought she would have died with laughing.

With the arrival of the youngest Miss Talbot-Lowry, and half the twins, a slight change fell upon Mr. Coppinger's voluble guests. A stiffening faint, almost imperceptible, yet electric, enforced the circle round Larry. Even Mrs. Whelply's confluent simper, that suggested an incessant dripping from the tap of loving kindness, failed a little. A young Mr. Coppinger was a simple affair, but a Miss Talbot-Lowry, however young, might want watching.

The youngest Miss Talbot-Lowry was, happily for herself, quite unaware of the estimation in which she was held. She had, like Larry, that quality of selflessness that is so rare and so infinitely engaging; what was she (she would have thought) that respect should be paid to her? It was a tenet of her eccentric creed that age was not only honourable but was also pathetic, so, when the picnic at large had begun its leisurely advance through the woods to the promised land, Christian selected the oldest and least promising of the Cluhir matrons for her special attention, and made herself so agreeable to her, that Barty Mangan, "mooching" (as his mother afterwards reproached him) solitary, in the rear of the procession, found himself in the remarkable position of wishing that he were his own great-aunt, Mrs. Cantwell.

Barty Mangan's opportunities for meeting Christian had been but few, but they had sufficed to light a fatal star in his sky, and to induce in him, when, as now, he found himself in her vicinity, an attitude towards the rest of the world that justified his mother's employment of the verb to "mooch" (a word that may be taken as implying a moody and furtive aloofness).

There was, Mrs. Mangan was pleased to observe, no mooching about her daughter. On the launching of the picnic, Tishy had immediately assumed the lead, with an *aplomb* and assurance justified by her family's special intimacy with young Mr. Coppinger, and all who knew Tishy, knew also that she meant to keep it. Dr. Mangan had not over-stated the case when, three years earlier, he had said to himself that she was a right-down handsome girl. Now, at

twenty-one and a half, his paternal pride was well justified. Like him, she was tall and strongly built, tall, that is to say, for a class that rarely excels in height, and Tishy's five and a half feet enabled her to look down on most of her friends. Her broad, dark eyebrows grew straight and low over brilliant grey eyes, and were nearly reached by thick upward curled black eyelashes. If her mouth was large, it was well-shaped, and if her nose did not possess the classic severity of her brother's, its challenging tilt was not unattractive. To these charms must be added shining masses of dark hair, and a complexion of so vivid a tone, that it seemed sometimes as though a fog of carmine coloured the very atmosphere about her glowing face. She radiated vitality, the richness and abundance of high summer; she suggested a darkly gorgeous peacock-butterfly, and in the delicate radiance of the spring woods, she seemed out of key with their slender elegance of leaf and spray, the soft reticence of their faint greens and greys.

It is indeed hardly fair to expect of Tishy Mangan that she should be worthy of such a setting as southern Irish woods can offer in the month of May. It is the month of the Mother of God, and in the fair demesne of Coppinger's Court, Heaven had truly visited the earth, and was chiefly and specially manifest in the Wood of the Ownashee. The trees stood with their feet bathed in the changeful, passionate blue of the wild hyacinths, a blue that lay sometimes in deep pools, sometimes in thin drifts, like the azure of far skies; the pale ferns rose in it, "like sweet thoughts in a dream"; the grey stems of the beeches were chequered with the sunlight that their thin branches and little leaves tried in vain to baffle and keep at bay. From the unseen river came varying voices; sometimes a soft chuckle that had the laughing heart of the spring in it, sometimes a rich and rushing harmony, that told of distant heights and the wind on the hills. There was a blackbird who was whistling over and over again the opening bar of the theme of a presto, that, only last week, Larry had heard, whipped out with frolic glee

by the violins of a London orchestra. He wondered if, with such themes, it is the blackbirds who inspire the musicians, or if both have access to the same secret well of music, in which each can dip his little bucket, and bring listeners in the outer world a taste of the living water of melody. But since (in spite of the Artistic Temperament) he was a normal boy, what he said was:

"Stunning! Isn't it!" while he stood still, waiting, for the hidden artist to favour them with another flourish of that gay string of jewels. "He's 'recapturing' it all right, eh?"

The much-quoted quotation passed by Tishy as the idle wind. Even had she recognised the allusion, she would have considered the professional raptures of a blackbird a rather dull subject of conversation. The gallants of Cluhir did not deal in such matters in *tête à tête* with her, and she thought, as she had thought at the children's party, long ago, that Larry, if not quite a bore, might, in spite of Coppinger's Court, rather easily become one.

"Oh, he's stunning enough!" she replied, with her full-throated, contralto laugh; "It must be his first cousin we have in the garden behind Number Six! Dad says he doesn't know, does him or me sing the loudest!"

By Jove! She sings! thought Larry (as he was meant to think). Of course! What a fool he was to have forgotten it! And as, at this period of his career, of the three arts, who were always riding a pace in his soul, Music, Painting, and Literature, Music happened to be the leading horse, Larry looked upon Tishy with eyes in which a new ardour had awakened, and proceeded with his accustomed speed to mature the details of the concert upon which he had, during the last sixty seconds, enthusiastically decided.

Old Mrs. Cantwell, although unpromising of aspect, was by no means as deplorable, socially, as Christian had assumed her to be. The fact that she was the untramelled owner of a soundly-invested fifteen thousand pounds, that she was the aunt whom Dr. Mangan delighted to honour, combined with the allied fact that she had paid for the hiring

of the picnic-bearing wagonette, gave her an importance that could be undervalued only by one as ignorant of the greater concerns of life as was Christian. Mrs. Cantwell accepted the companionship of the youngest Miss Talbot-Lowry as no more than her due, and the thought that compassion had prompted its bestowal, was very far from her mind. None the less, the Noah's Ark principles that governed implicitly, if not ostensibly Cluhir entertainments of this nature, were firmly embedded in her being, and she was entirely aware of the furtive presence of Barty, at the rear of the procession of which she and Christian formed the last couple.

"Now, my dear," she observed, while she and Christian paced side by side, along the river path, "you shouldn't be wasting time on an old woman like me! When I was young, we'd have called this a Two and Two party, and I promise you that the likes o' you and me wouldn't have been reckoned a proper couple at all! Not when *I* was a girl!"

"*I* should have said that you and I were irreproachably proper, Mrs. Cantwell," responded Christian, gaily; "it isn't very kind of you to say that we aren't behaving as we should!" She laughed into Mrs. Cantwell's old face, and she, being quite unused to girls who took the trouble to flirt with her, began to think that Frankie Mangan (thus she designated her nephew, the doctor) was right when he said that the youngest of the Talbot-Lowrys was the best of the bunch.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" she said, with a laugh like the whinny of an old horse; "it's a long time since I kicked my heels over anything higher than a hearth-rug! But I can tell you, my dear, I was a good warrant for a play-boy when I was your age! There wasn't a young girl, no, nor a young man either, that I couldn't dance down if I gave my mind to it!"

Christian's response was satisfactory, and Mrs. Cantwell, moved to give a sample of her bygone prowess, executed a hippopotamus-like hop and shuffle among the rustling, orange beech leaves of last year.

"Polkas and Mazoorkas!" she exclaimed. "Them was all the go in my time! Come on here, Barty, ye omadhaun! I believe I could dance you off those long legs of yours this minute, if I was to give me mind to it!"

Barty, thus adjured by his great-aunt, drew near. Mrs. Cantwell was not a person to be lightly disobeyed, but his dark eyes were full of apprehension. What might Aunt Bessie not say! She was incalculable, terrible.

There are old people who appear to find an indemnity for their lost youth in permitting to themselves, in dealing with later generations, a scarifying freedom of humour in connection with subjects which once they held sacred (for there are few souls that have not at some time enshrined a tender emotion).

Barty had suffered before now from Aunt Bessy, and he thought that if she made of him an offence to Miss Talbot-Lowry, he would straightway rush into the river and drown himself. Aunt Bessy, however, potentially Rabelaisian though she might be, was perfectly aware of the fact that there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence.

"See here, Barty," she said, "let you go on now, and tell your mother not to be waiting tea for me. I'll take me own time. Tell her never fear I'll turn up, only I like to go me own pace!" She turned to Christian. "Go on you too, my dear; I'm well enough pleased with me own company, and I hate to be delaying you. I'll sit down for a while and admire the scenery."

Thus did Aunt Bessy, as she complacently told herself, watch over the interests of her great-nephew, and though her method was crude, it indisputably achieved its object.

Christian and Barty Mangan walked on in silence that was made companionable by the gurgling whisper of the river behind its screen of hazels and alders; a whisper broken now and again by the tittering laugh of the flying water over a shallow place, like someone with a good story that he cannot quite venture to tell out loud.

Barty was saying to himself, distractedly: "What'll I say

to her? What'll I talk to her about?" with each repetition winding himself, like a cocoon, deeper in webs of shyness.

Christian's social perceptions were hypersensitive, and the *cris de cœur* of her suffering companion were only too audible to her spiritual ear. At eighteen, the quality of mercy has seldom developed; the young demand mercy, they expect to receive, not to bestow it; but in this girl was something that made her different from her fellows. It was as though a soul more tempered, more instructed, more subtle and refined, had been given to her, than is vouchsafed to the majority of the poor creatures who are sent into this difficult world with an equipment that rarely meets its demands.

This is a long-winded way of saying that Christian realised that she had to restore confidence in Larry's young friend, and that she proceeded forthwith to do so. She would have laughed at the thought that anyone could be afraid of her, but she felt instinctively that a soothing monologue, a sort of cradle-song, was what the occasion demanded; so she began to speak of the bluebells, the woods, the weather, saying with a sort of languid simplicity, the things that the moment suggested; "babbling," as she subsequently assured Judith, "of green fields," until she had so lulled and bored him, that in self-defence he produced an observation.

"D'you read, Miss Christian?" said Barty, bringing forth his mouse with an abrupt and mountainous effort.

Christian repressed the reply that she had possessed the accomplishment for some years, and asked for further information.

"Poetry," said Barty, largely; "it's—it's the only reading I care for. I thought you might like it——" he added, hurriedly, and was again wrapped in the cocoon.

"Oh, I do, very much," said Christian, trying hard not to quench the smoking flax; "I've learnt quantities by heart, and Larry is always lending me new books of poetry. He says that you and he discuss it together."

"I never knew one like him!" said Barty, with sudden energy. "There's no subject at all that he's not interested

in!" In the heat of his enthusiasm for Larry, the cocoon wrappings were temporarily shrivelled. He turned his dark, short-sighted eyes on Christian, and took up his parable with excitement.

"Did he tell you he's learning Irish? I'll engage it'll be no trouble to *him!*"

"He's always getting hold of new ideas," said Christian; "I wish *I* could learn Irish."

"There's a branch of the Gaelic League in Cluhir," said Barty, eagerly. "There are a lot learning Irish. I suppose you wouldn't be disposed to become a member, Miss Christian?" He gazed at her imploringly.

"I don't know if I should be allowed," said Christian, hesitatingly. "You see I've only just come home. I've been at school in Paris for the last two years——"

A memory of a ferocious denunciation of the Gaelic League by her father came to her; she wondered what Barty would do if she offered him one of the profane imitations of the Major that had earned for her the laurels of the schoolroom.

"Oh, I'm quite sure I mightn't become a Gaelic Leaguer!" she repeated, beginning to laugh, while samples of her father's rhetoric welled up in her mind.

Barty thought he had never seen anything so enchanting as her face, as she looked at him, laughing, with wavering lights, filtered through young beech leaves, in her eyes. He felt a delirious desire to show her that he was not a tongue-tied fool; that he also, like Larry, was a man of ideas.

"I wish to God!" he said, with the disordered violence of a shy man, "that there was anny league or society in Ireland that would override class prejudice, and oblitherate religious bigotry!"

He had snatched a paragraph from his last address to the Gaelic Leaguers of Cluhir, and with it was betrayed into the pronunciation that mastered him in moments of excitement.

Christian said to herself that she thanked heaven Judith wasn't there to make her laugh.

"I don't *think* I'm a religious bigot," she said, with a faint tremor in her voice, "but one never knows!" Her head was bent down, the brim of her large hat hid her face.

Barty was stricken. What devil had possessed him? She was hurt! She was a Protestant, and in his cursed folly he had made her think he was reproaching her for Bigotry. Good God! What could he do?

Two emotions, hung, as it were, on hair-triggers, held the stage. In Christian, the fiend of laughter held sway, in poor Barty, the angel of tears. It was perhaps well for them both that their next step in advance took them round a bend in the path, and brought them face to face with the picnic.

CHAPTER XVIII

YOUNG Mr. Coppinger had been well inspired in his selection of a site for the entertainment. The trees along the river's bank had ceased for a space, leaving a level ring of grass, whereon certain limestone boulders had scattered themselves, with the deliberate intention, as it would seem, of providing seats for picnickers. Across that fairy circle of greenness a small vassal-stream bore its tribute waters to the Ownashee, with as much dignity as it had been able to assume in the forty level yards that lay between its suzerain and the steep glen down which it had flung itself. Not only had young Mr. Coppinger been so gracious as to provide this setting for the revel, but he was even now sacrificing a spotless pair of white flannel trousers to the needs of the company, and had concentrated on the cajolery of the fire, which, obedient to the etiquette that rules picnic fires, refused to consume any fuel less stimulating than matches. Other of the young gentlemen of the party, including the half-twin, Mr. George Talbot-Lowry (now a sub-lieut. R.N.) were detailed to gather sticks, a duty that was so arranged as to involve, with each load of firewood, the jumping of the vassal-stream, and thus gave opportunity for a display akin to that of the jungle-cocks, who, naturalists inform us, leap emulatively before their ladies. Prominent among these was that youth who, as a medical student, had inspired Miss Mangan in flapperhood, with an admiration for his gifts, intellectual and physical, that was only equalled by his own appreciation of these advantages. His opinion remained unchanged, but he was beginning to fear that Tishy's taste was deteriorating. None sprang more lightly

across that little stream, or commented more humorously on men and things, than Captain Edward Cloherty, R.A.M.C.; yet Miss Mangan, to whom these exercises were dedicated, remained oblivious of them and aloof, apparently wholly absorbed by Martha-like attentions with regard to the public welfare, and particularly those connected with the fire. It was not for nothing that Tishy had had to rise early on many a winter morning to see that her father should go forth to his work suitably warmed and fed. Now, with scathing criticisms of the methods of Mr. Coppinger, she swept him from his position as stoker, and, as by magic, or so it seemed to him, the sticks blazed, the kettle began to sing. Miss Mangan's skill was not limited to the prosaic lighting of material fires only. With the two most distinguished young men of the party at her feet, she rose to the height of all her various powers. The fire roared and crackled, the kettle bubbled, and Tishy's grey and gleaming glances through the smoke were like a succession of boxes of matches, cast upon the responsive fires of Larry's and Georgy's holiday hearts.

The young May moon has often been a factor in affairs of the heart whose importance cannot be ignored. It is true that on this especial afternoon the mischief might seem to have been begun before she could, strictly, have been held responsible; none the less her madness must have been in the air, otherwise it is difficult to account for the joint and simultaneous overthrow of two young gentlemen of taste and quality, by Miss Tishy Mangan.

Georgy, aged but 19, just home from far and forlorn seas, with, as the poet says, a heart for any fate, might have been excused for swallowing any good provided for him by the gods, whole, and without criticism, but for Mr. St. Lawrence Coppinger, lately come of age, a man of taste, endowed with special *finesse* of feeling, it might have been expected that a highly-coloured peacock butterfly would have had but scant appeal. In fact, one is driven back upon the young May Moon as the sole plausible explanation of the

fact that, on that afternoon of bewitchment, Tishy Mangan went to Larry's head.

These temporary abberations are afflictions for which the most refined young men must occasionally be prepared, and Larry's overthrow was not without justification. Quite apart from her looks—and anyone would have been forced to admit that they were undeniable—there was her voice, the true contralto *timbre,* thick and mellow, dark and sweet, like heather honey, he thought, while he and Georgy sprawled on the grass at her feet (and she had good feet) making very indifferent jokes, in that exaggerated travesty of an Irish brogue which is often all that an English school will leave with Irish boys, and vieing with each other in the folly proper to such an occasion.

"I don't see your shoe-buckles!" Larry said, looking from her feet to her lips, with a meaning and impudent lift of his blue eyes. "Have you given up wearing them?"

Tishy's colour deepened; she remembered instantly what she was meant to remember.

"You're regretting the choice you made, are you?" she said, with a toss of her head. "Never fear! The buckles will be there when they're wanted!"

"Don't trouble about them!" says Larry, tremendously pleased with his success as a flirtatious man of the world; "I don't think they will be required!"

It is necessary to have attained to a reasonably advanced age to be able to recognise pathos in the fatuities that so frequently form a feature of love's young dream. Christian, listening with one ear to her brother and cousin, while into the other the genuine idiom of her native land flowed, ardently, from the now unsealed lips of Barty Mangan, began to wonder why the boys were talking like stage Irishmen; Georgy, she knew, was idiot enough for anything, but she had to admit to herself that Larry, also, was rather overdoing it. Christian was able to feel amused, but she also felt, quite illogically, that what had been distaste for Tishy Mangan was rapidly deepening into dislike.

The picnic raged on, with prodigious eatings and drinkings, with capsizings of teapots in full sail, with disastrous slaughterings of insects (disastrous to plates and tablecloths rather than to the insects) with facetious doings with heated tea-spoons and pellets of bread, with, in short, all that Mrs. Mangan and her fellow hostesses expected of a truly prosperous picnic.

Captain Cloherty, alone, of all the company, failed to contribute his share to the sum of success. He sat silent, a thing of gloom, the lively angle of whose waxed, red moustache only accentuated the downward droop of the mouth beneath it. But the skeleton at the feast has its uses, if only as a contrast, and Mrs. Mangan, who was more observant than she appeared to be, noted the gloom with a gratified eye, and being entirely aware of its cause, said to herself with satisfaction:

"Ha, ha, me young man!"

This picnic was, in truth, made ever memorable in the circle of Mrs. Mangan's friends by reason of the triumph of Tishy.

"Ah, that was the day she cot the two birds under the one stone!" Great-Aunt Cantwell (who did not care for her great-niece) was accustomed to say. "Well! Such goings-on! And after all, Tishy's nothing so much out of the way, for all Frankie Mangan thinks the world should die down before her!"

The two birds referred to were still fluttering round their captor, when a new element was added to the party in the large presence of "Frankie Mangan" himself. The Big Doctor approached slowly, elephant-like in his noiseless, rolling gait, impressive, as is an elephant, in size, in the feeling he imparted of restrained strength, of intense intelligence, masked, as in an elephant, with benevolence, and held watchfully in reserve.

He now advanced upon the scene of festivity with purpose in his manner.

"Now, ladies! Let me tell you I'm come on a very un-

popular errand! To apply the closure! I think you're all sitting out here long enough for the time of year. Remember it's only May!"

"We're more likely to remember it's Mayn't!" retorted Mrs. Whelply, who was a recognised wit, and opponent of the Big Doctor. "Isn't it enough for him to bully us when we're sick, but he comes tormenting us when we're well, too!"

Thus she appealed to her fellow-matrons, looking round upon them for support with a festive eye.

"You'll none of you be well long, if you don't mind yourselves!" answered, with equal spirit, the Doctor, with a quiet eye on his daughter and her attendant swains.

"Why then I have a sore throat this minute with scolding Mr. Coppinger for the nonsense he's talking!" declared Mrs. Whelply. "Asking me to sing a cawmic at the concert he says he's going to have! There's no fear but whatever *I* sing will be cawmic enough!"

"I'm sure I'll have great pleasure in cauterising you!" responded the Doctor, gallantly; "but if you'll take my advice now, you won't want so much of it later on!"

"I thought you were going to take me on the river," said Tishy in a low voice to Larry, looking resentfully at her father.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Larry, quickly; "much better than the river—we'll go back to the house and dance! I'll fix it up with your father!"

"Good egg!" said Sub-Lieut. Talbot-Lowry, with seaman-like decision, "Miss Mangan will kindly note all waltzes are reserved for use of naval officers!"

"Miss Mangan will kindly do no such thing!" returned that young lady, dealing a flash from between her curled eyelashes that put the naval officer temporarily out of action, so devastating was its effect.

Had not Frederica Coppinger, resting in her club in Dublin, after a severe afternoon with her dentist, some intuition, some spirit-warning, of what was befalling at the

home of her ancestors? I believe that those spear-thrusts of nerve-pain that assailed her just before dinner, must have been the result of the wireless summons of distress sent forth to her by her upper-housemaid.

"What next, I wonder, will Master Larry be asking for?" said the upper housemaid to the cook. "The drawing-room carpet pitched into the study, and Miss Coppinger's own room turned upside down for the riff-raff of Cluhir to be powdering their noses in! 'Haven't she no powder?' says they. 'No matter,' says the Doctor's daughter, 'sure I have a book of it in me little bag!'"

"I wouldn't at all doubt her!" said the cook, saturninely, "But what's the drawn'-room carpet to conjuring a supper out of me pocket in five minutes? I ask you that, Eliza Hosford!"

None the less, with that deep loyalty to the honour of the house that is a feature in Irish domestic life as wonderful as it is touching, the staff of Coppinger's Court were resolved that—as they say in China—the face of Master Larry should not be blackened, and The Riff-Raff of Cluhir were served with a ceremony and a success that left nothing to be desired.

Dr. Mangan sat in a very large armchair in front of a big fire of logs, in the hall, and smoked meditatively, and was seemingly quite unaware of the couples who moved past him between the dances, passing out through the open hall-door into the moon-lit May night. He did not even raise an eyelid when his daughter sailed by him, as she did many times, with the ostentation of the young lady who is aware that her prowess is the subject of comment, in company, alternately, with the two captives of her bow and spear who had offered so feeble a resistance to those weapons. Tishy and her father alike ascribed her victory to that redoubtable and already creditably battle-scarred bow and spear; they neither of them recognised the acknowledgments that were due to a certain powerful ally, the May moon. She had stolen up the sky at the back of the woods. The first Larry knew of her was the vast, incredible, pale disc behind the

topmost boughs of the pine trees, so near that it seemed to him as though the crooked black branches alone were holding her back, and that her white fire that was pouring through them must consume them, "and then it will be our turn," he said, seriously, and without preamble, to Tishy.

"Our turn for what?" asked Tishy, very naturally.

"Our turn to be resolved into moonshine. You'll see me fading away into silver smoke in a minute," replied Larry. "Let's get out of this, I'm getting frightened! Hold my hand tight!"

"Go on with your nonsense!" said Tishy. "And will you tell me how can I hold your hand when it's round my waist?"

Which was reasonable enough, and may be taken as a sufficient indication of what the moon was already responsible for.

A point of red light moved in the darkness above the seat under the laurels, to which they were repairing, and the scent of a Virginian cigarette was wafted to them.

"Who's that?" Tishy whispered, pressing nearer to Larry; but she was agreeably certain that it was the gloomy and misanthropic Captain Cloherty, whose place of refuge they had invaded.

Christian, meanwhile, unlike Captain Cloherty, was conscientiously endeavouring to enjoy herself, and was finding that the wheels of the chariot of pleasure drave heavily. That Barty Mangan was a good dancer was an alleviation, but among those stigmatised by Eliza Hosford as the riff-raff of Cluhir, those now forgotten measures of the first years of this century, the prancing barn-dance, the capering *pas-de-quatre,* lent themselves to a violence that, even at the uncritical age of eighteen, Christian found overpowering. "They danced like the Priests of Baal," she told Judith. "One expected to see them cut themselves with knives!"

The information that the dog-cart had come for her was of the nature of a release. Barty put her into it. The May moon shone on his pale face as he looked up at Christian,

and reverently took her hand in farewell. She had begun to find his dark and humble devotion oppressive; she liked him, which did not prevent her from thanking heaven when he released her hand from a pressure that had lasted longer than he knew. He stood on the gravel and watched the departing dog-cart vanish, like a ghostly thing, into the elusive mist of moonlight. The May moon, now sailing full overhead, looked with a broad satisfaction on the hardest hit of her victims.

CHAPTER XIX

At intervals in all histories there comes a pause, in which the moralities proper to the occasion are assembled, expounded and expanded. Such a moment might now seem to have arrived, its theme being the grain-of-mustard-seed-like character of the Cluhir picnic, as compared with the events that subsequently dwelt in its branches, nesting there, and raising up other events that flew far and wide, farther and wider than they can here be followed. But since moralities appeal only to the moral (to whom they are superfluous) it seems advisable to proceed at once to the primary result, which was the concert, that sprang like a Phœnix from the ashes of that fire on which the picnic kettle was boiled.

The scheme had various appeals for its two chief promoters, young Mr. Coppinger and Sub. Lieut. Talbot-Lowry, R.N. Immanent in it was the necessity for frequent, almost for daily, visits to No. 6, The Mall, Cluhir. For the former of these gentlemen, whose acquaintance with the Mangan family was now of long, if of intermittent, familiarity, these visits afforded a less thrilling emotion than they held for the latter, who found himself honoured and welcomed in a degree to which he was quite unaccustomed at home. Larry was not quite sure that he approved of this blaze of social success for his young cousin. It is one thing to receive, languidly, the adulation of those in whom such adulation may be regarded as an indication of a widening horizon; but when an equal veneration is lavished upon the junior and disdained play-fellow of earlier years, the result is often a reconsideration of values. The May madness

that rose like a mist from the bluebells in the woods of the Ownashee, and culminated in the magical light of the full moon, began to lift from the spirit of young Mr. Coppinger, leaving him, as he formulated it to himself (and found much satisfaction in the formula) bereft, bored, and benignant. He was quite prepared to retire gracefully in favour of Georgy, and was pleased with the thought that his interest in Tishy had been merely the outcome of a mood—*l'après-midi d'un faune*—so to speak. There was something artistic in these transient emotions, and his future, as at present determined, was to be devoted to art; certainly not to Tishy Mangan. Yes, he would leave Tishy to Georgy; all but her voice; in that, as an artist, he still retained an interest, the interest of the *impresario,* whose search for stars is as absorbing as is that of the astronomer in pursuits of new worlds.

The passion and energy of the promoter are, it may be supposed, born in human beings in a certain proportion to those who are to become their victims. In Larry, both qualities were highly developed, and in no way did he prove the genuineness of his heaven-given *flair* more surely than in his discovery and annexation of Christian, as that rare and precious thing, a sympathetic and capable accompanist.

But although the thought of dwelling upon this and other of the details of the Cluhir concert, is appealing, it must be dismissed. So much has already been said in the hope that some further indications as to the character and conduct of some of our young friends may have been deduced; but now, certain glossings upon the household of Mount Music must be inflicted, since it is with it, rather than with the capabilities of young Mr. Coppinger's troupe, that we are mainly occupied.

It is not easy to say whether the process of emergence from the sheath of childhood, a condition that has characteristics more or less common to us all, is more interesting to feel than to observe. In Christian's case, the interest was felt exclusively by herself, her family being healthily absorbed in the conjugation of the three primary verbs, to be, to do,

and to have, in relation, exclusively, to themselves, and that merely from the skin outwards. Soul-processes and developments were unknown to them in life, and were negligible in books. Lady Isabel pursued her blameless way, doing nothing in particular, diligently and unpunctually, and spending much time in writing long and loving letters to those of her family who were no longer beneath her wing, in that particular type of large loose handwriting whose indefinite spikes stab to the heart any hope of literary interest. Who shall say that she did not do her duty according to her lights? But she was certainly quite unconscious of such matters as soul-processes.

Alone of the Mount Music children, Christian was aware of an inner personality to be considered, some spirit that heard and responded to those voices and intimations that, as a little child, she had accepted as a commonplace of every day. By the time that she was sixteen the voices had been discouraged, if not stilled, their intimations dulled; but she had discovered her soul, and had discovered also, that it had been born on the farther side of the river of life from the souls of her brethren, and that although, for the first stages, the stream was narrow, and the way on one bank very like that on the other, the two paths were divided by deep water, and the river widened with the passing years.

Richard, pursuing the usual course of Irish eldest sons, had adopted the profession least adapted for young men of small means, and large spending capacity, and had gone into his father's old regiment. John, the zealot of an earlier day, was at Oxford, considering the Church; Georgy's career has been announced, and the remaining twin had, with the special predisposition of his family towards financial failure, selected the profession of land-agent, in a country in which peasant-proprietorship was already in the air, and would soon become an accomplished fact.

There remains, to complete the family history, Judith, and she, now aged twenty-one, was possibly the sole member of the house of Talbot-Lowry for whom a successful future

might confidently be anticipated. Judith, a buccaneer by nature and by practice, was habitually engaged in swashbucklering it on a round of visits. She was good-looking, tall, talkative, and an able player of all the games proper to the state of life to which she had been called. She was a competent guest, giving as much entertainment as she received, being of those who contribute as efficiently indirectly, as directly, to conversation, and are normally involved in one of those skirmishes of the heart, that cannot be described as engagements, but that, none the less, invest their heroines with an atmosphere of respect, and provide hostesses with subjects of anxiety and interest. At an early age, Christian was promoted by her elder sister to the position of confidante, and justified the promotion by the happy mixture of sympathy and cynicism with which she received the confidences. She was now well versed in the brief passions that, beginning at the second or third dance of a regimental ball, would, like some night-flowering tropic blossom, arrive at full splendour by supper time, and would expire languorously, to the strains of "God save the King." Christian, though young, was, as had been said, a capable audience. She could listen, with the severe and youthful grace that seemed to set her a little apart from others of her standing, to the feats of Judith and her fellow-blackguards, savouring and appraising the absurdities, and her comments upon them were offered with a sympathetic and skilled comprehension that excused her in Judith's eyes for her lack of ambition to emulate them.

Dick Talbot-Lowry had ceased to boast of the predominance of the masculine gender among his offsprings, and rarely alluded to his sons without coupling with their names a vigorous statement of how far in excess of their value was their cost, usually ending with an enquiry into the dark rulings of Providence, who had bestowed an expensive family with one hand, and with the other had taken away the means of supporting it. Dick was sixty-four now, an un-

happy moment in a dashing and artless career, with the shadow of advancing old age blighting and reproving the still ardent enjoyment of the pleasures of youth.

"I'm an old man now!" Dick would say, without either feeling or meaning it, and would bitterly resent the failure of his sons to contradict a statement with which they were in complete agreement. Only Christian, "of all his halls had nursed," tried to maintain her father in a good conceit of himself, and to "rise his heart"; but there are few hearts for which it is more difficult to perform that office than the heart of a man, who, having ever (as King David says) taken pleasure in the strength of horses, and delighted in his own legs, is beginning to find that the former have become too strong, and the latter too weak for either comfort or confidence.

And not these things only were troubling Dick. The common lot of Irish landlords, and Pterodactyli, was upon him, and he was in process of becoming extinct. It was his fate to see his income gradually diminishing, being eaten away, as the sea eats away a bulwark-less shore, by successive Acts of Parliament, and the machinery they created, "for the purpose," as old Lord Ardmore was fond of fulminating, of "pillaging loyal Peter in order to pamper rebel Paul!" The opinion of very old, and intolerant, and indignant peers cannot always be taken seriously, but it is surely permissible to feel a regret for kindly, improvident Dick Talbot-Lowry, his youth and his income departing together, and the civic powers that he had once exercised, reft from him. Such power as he had had, he had exercised honourably and with reverent confidence in precedent, and when he had damned Parnell, and had asserted, in stentorian tones, that Cromwell was the only man who had ever known how to govern Ireland, and he, unfortunately, was now in hell; where, the Major would add, he was probably better off, his contribution to constructive politics had ended. He and his generation, reactionary almost to a man, instead of attempting to ride the waves of the rising tide, subscribed their guineas to

construct breakwaters that were pathetic in their futility. Gallant in resistance, barren in expedient, history may condemn the folly of the Old Guard of the "English Garrison," but it cannot deny, even though it may deride, its fidelity.

CHAPTER XX

Lady Isabel Talbot-Lowry had invited what is concisely spoken of as "people" to tea and tennis. The month was June, but the weather was March, or at best, a sullen and overcast April. The purport of the entertainment had been the exhibition, to rival amateurs, of the Mount Music herbaceous borders, which, though "not looking quite their best," were as nearly approximating to that never-achieved ideal, as is ever the case with either gardens or children; but showers of chill rain had marred the display, and the lawn tennis was fitful, and subject to frequent interruption. In these circumstances, a fire of turf and logs did not need apologies for its presence, and Lady Isabel and her companion Heads of Households sat with it as their focal point, and thought, as they saw the players flitting to and fro between the showers, and the house, and the lawn tennis grounds, that middle age had privileges that were not to be despised.

The long and lofty drawing-room of Mount Music was a pleasant place enough, even on this showery day. Some five or six generations of Talbot-Lowrys had lived in it, and left their marks on it, and though the indelible hand of Victoria, in youthful vigour, had had, perhaps, the most perceptible influence on it as a whole, the fancies and fashions of Major Dick's great-grandmother still held their places. An ottoman, large as a merry-go-round at a fair, immovable as an island, occupied, immutably, the space in the centre of the room immediately under a great cut-glass chandelier. Facing it was the fireplace, an affair of complicated design, with "Nelson ropes" and knots, and coils, in worked and twisted brass, and deep hobs, in whose construction the needs of a punch-kettle had not been forgotten. Above it, a high, delicately-inlaid marble mantelpiece, brought from Italy by

Dick's great-grandfather, was surmounted by a narrow ledge of marble, just wide enough to support the base of a Georgian mirror of flamboyant design, in whose dulled and bluish depths were reflected the row of old white china birds, that were seated, each on its own rock, on the shelf in front of it. Family portraits in frames whose charm of design and colour made atonement for the indifference of the painting, alternated with brown landscapes in which castles, bridges, and impenetrable groves were dimly to be discovered through veils of varnish; flotillas of miniatures had settled, like groups of flies, wherever on the crowded walls foothold could be found, and water-colours, pencil-drawings, and photographs, filled any remaining space. There were long and implacable sofas, each with its conventional sofa-table in front of it; Empire *consoles,* with pieces of china incredibly diverse in style, beauty, and value, jostling each other on the marble slabs; woolwork screens, worked by forgotten aunts and grandmothers, chairs of every known breed, and tables, tables everywhere, and not a corner on one of them on which anything more could be deposited. The claims of literature were acknowledged, but without enthusiasm. A tall, glass-fronted cupboard, inaccessibly placed behind the elongated tail of an early grand piano, was filled with ornate miniature editions of the classics, that would have defied an effort—had such ever been made—to remove them from their shelves, whereon they had apparently been bedded in cement, like mosaic. It was a room that, in its bewildering diversity, might have broken the hearts of housemaids or decorators; untidy, without plan, with rubbish contending successfully with museum-pieces, with the past and present struggling in their eternal rivalry; yet, a human place, a place full of the magnetism that is born of past happiness, a place to which all its successive generations of sons and daughters looked back with that softening of the heart that comes, when in, perhaps, a far-away country, memories of youth return, and with them the thought of home.

The ladies who, constant to the saner pleasures of conver-

sation and tea, had disposed themselves round and about Lady Isabel's tea-table, were of the inner circle of the friends of the house, and owned, as is usually the case where habits and environment are practically identical, a common point of view, and no more diversity of opinion than is enough to stimulate conversation. Such of them as had compelled husbands or sons to accompany them, had shaken them off at the lawn tennis ground, and though loud cawings from the hall indicated that certain of the more elderly males had congregated there, the ladies in the drawing-room had, so far, been "unmolested by either the young people or the men."

Thus, Miss Frederica Coppinger phrased it to those of her allies with whom she was now holding sweet communion. The allies, albeit separated by intervals of from five to ten miles of rough and often hilly road, met with sufficient frequency to keep touch, yet not often enough to crush the ultimate fragrance from the flower of gossip. Their most recent meeting had taken place at the concert, which had been Larry's last achievement before his return to Oxford, and although they had not been oppressively hampered by the convention of silence at such entertainments, conversation had been necessarily somewhat thwarted.

"They made quite a useful little sum at Larry's concert," said Frederica. "Local charities—which meant the Fowl Fund, of course—and Mr. Cotton and Father Greer. Dick said he would not support it if his old women were not helped—abominable cheats though most of them are!"

"I *feel* for them!" said Mrs. Kirby, intensely. "*No* one knows the misery and the beggary inflicted on me by the foxes that Bill encourages about the place!"

A sympathetic imagination enabled her friends to realise the misery and beggary which Mrs. Kirby's exceedingly cheerful and prosperous appearance concealed. Both groaned appropriately, and Miss Coppinger made the sweeping statement that she detested hunting in *all* its ramifications. "We are always told that its great merit is that it

brings all classes together," she continued. "In *my* opinion that is a very dubious advantage, if, indeed, it is not a drawback!"

Mrs. Kirby permitted her glance to commune for a brief instant with that of the third lady, Mrs. St. George.

"Like mixed concerts!" said Mrs. St. George, in a deep and awful voice.

"Mixed pickles!" murmured Mrs. Kirby, and chuckled at her jest.

Miss Frederica flushed.

"My dear Louisa," she said, resentfully, "I am perfectly aware of their disadvantages, but I should be obliged to you if you would tell me what I am to do! It is the difference in religion that makes me powerless. Powerless!" she repeated looking almost with triumph upon her companions, so irrefutable was her case.

"I hope I'm not a bigot," said Mrs. St. George impressively; "but I thank God I'm not a Roman Catholic!"

"'Not as other men are'!" quoted Miss Coppinger, with some acidity. Even though she agreed with the sentiment, she could not forget that Larry was her nephew.

"Oh, it isn't the actual *religion* I was thinking of," said Mrs. St. George, rather hurriedly, Larry's disadvantages having temporarily escaped her memory. "It was rather—well——"

"For boys it doesn't matter so much," broke in Mrs. Kirby, "but I really *did* dislike seeing Christian on the platform with that party!"

"She was only playing accompaniments," said Miss Coppinger, still resentful.

"That only made it worse! If she had sung a solo it would have been less humiliating," replied Mrs. Kirby, with a masterly change of front. "I was indignant! Christian, with her charming voice, only playing accompaniments and singing in the glees, and that unendurable Mangan girl posing as the Prima Donna, and oh! her clothes!"

"Or her want of them!" interposed Mrs. St. George, on a profound bass note.

"And her songs! I don't profess to know much about music, but I *do* know what I like!" continued Mrs. Kirby, with the finality and decision that usually accompany this admission. "People may tell me she has a fine voice, but I *detest* enormous contralto voices! *What* I suffered during the last thing she sang as an encore! And that final yell of 'Asthore'! at least an octave below her voice! I could only think of the bellow of the cow that jumped over the moon!"

"What made *me* indignant," said Mrs. St. George, in emulous depreciation, ignoring this flight of fancy, "was their not having 'God save the King'! A cowardly concession to the Gaelic League, of course! I really think that Georgy, who is in the Navy, might have insisted upon it!"

"They did discuss it," said Frederica, forced by her friends into the position of devil's advocate, "but they were afraid of the sixpenny seats. The Mangans said that there would inevitably be rows. They have had to give up having it at anything now."

This was unanswerable, and Mrs. St. George tacitly accepted defeat.

"I believe that young Mangan is simply a *Rebel,*" resumed Mrs. Kirby, portentously. "Bill thinks he'll go too far some day, and the police will *have* to take notice of him. But with the Government yielding and pandering——"

Here, at least, was a subject on which all three disputants were in complete agreement. Wolfe Tone or Robert Emmet could hardly have abhorred the Government of England more heartily than did these three respectable, law-abiding, unalterably-Unionist ladies, and for some time the more recent enormities of the rule upon which they theoretically bestowed their unshakable allegiance, took precedence of Miss Mangan as a subject of disapproval.

"Nevertheless," summed up Mrs. St. George gloomily, at the end of a sweeping condemnation, "we must submit.

We can do nothing. As Courtney says, *we* can't cut off cows' tails and shoot our tenants for not paying their rent! *He* says——"

Colonel St. George's further views were lost in the entrance of the lawn tennis players, rain-sprinkled, heated, bringing with them a lively aroma of trodden grass and wet flannel, and convinced of their superiority to those who had sought shelter, and were now (to quote Miss Talbot-Lowry) soddenly eating all the hot cakes. Judith had recently returned from one of her forays, and had not spared her family her views on the *rapprochement* with the musical world of Cluhir that the concert had involved. She was now seated with Bill Kirby on a secluded sofa in a corner of the long drawing-room, and was entertaining that deeply-enamoured young man with her accustomed fluency.

Mr. Kirby, having petted and patronised Judith in her youth, when he was still nine years older than she, had, since her recent return, awakened to the fact that this difference in age had been mysteriously obliterated, and that at present, Judith was not only his superior in intelligence, but also in all those subsidiary matters in which age is generally and erroneously believed to confer an advantage.

"If it had even been a good concert," Judith remarked, gobbling tea and cake with a heartiness that, taken in connection with an admirable complexion and very clear blue eyes, was in itself attractive to a hungry young man, "I could have borne it better. But it was absolutely deadly—all but just our own people's turns, of course—a sort of lyrical geography—the map of Ireland set to music! Bantry Bay, Killarney, the Mountains of Somewhere, the Waters of Somewhere else, all Irish, of course! I get so sick of Ireland and her endearing young charms—and all the entreaties to Erin to remember! As if she ever forgot!"

"She remembers her enemies, all right," rejoined Bill Kirby, gloomily, "but she forgets her friends! I know someone who hasn't got any enemies to remember, but she's just like Ireland in one way!"

"What way?" demanded Judith, "and who do you mean?"

"You know very well who I mean! And the reason she's like Ireland is that she forgets her friends! People who used to give her leads out hunting when she was a little girl, and never forgot *her!*"

"In the first place, I deny it, and in the second place, it serves them right if she does forget them," replied Judith tranquilly; "I don't know the injured beings you refer to, but I *do* know my own family. I take my eye off them for five minutes, and I come home to find they have not only forgotten my existence, but they have plunged into the heart of that appalling Cluhir crowd, and are indignant with me —at least the boys and papa are—because I don't do the same! Strange as it may appear, *I* like nice people!"

"I wasn't talking of your family," said Bill Kirby, morosely, "Hang it all. *I'm* quite a nice person, and *I* haven't plunged into the heart of Cluhir, but it's only by a sort of accident, like this, that you will ever say a word to me!"

"You'd better insure against accidents of this kind!" said Judith, who was frankly enjoying herself; "and if you choose to renounce the charms of Cluhir, you needn't make a virtue of it! Perhaps they don't want you! They mayn't realise what a nice person you are! Would you like me to explain to Tishy Mangan——"

Bill Kirby, who was possessed of good brown eyes and a profile like a handsome battle-axe, was a young man of no special intellectual gifts, but the sound judgment that distinguished him in the hunting-field was wont to stand his friend in other emergencies. He was entirely aware that he was no match for Judith in debate, but he was also aware that deeds sometimes speak louder than words. He attempted no spoken reply, but after a wary glance round the room, he permitted his large, brown hand to descend upon and envelop Judith's, that rested on the sofa beside him.

"You know you're talking rot," he murmured, cautiously,

"No, don't struggle. If you say things like that, you've got to be punished. Are you sorry?"

"Not in the least!" replied Judith, with an equal caution; "but you will be, soon! Mrs. St. George is looking at you!"

The battle-axe profile of Mr. Kirby betrayed no hint of the situation.

"Keep quiet, and say you're sorry! *I* don't mind sitting here all the afternoon—like this," he added, with a slight additional pressure.

"I shall count three," said Judith suavely, "and then I shall ask you in a loud, clear voice to get me another cup of tea. One——"

Further developments of the situation need not be attempted, the more so as at this juncture the entrance of two uninvited guests caused a redistribution of seats, whose most marked feature was the creation of a desert space round the new arrivals and their hostess.

It would perhaps be irregular to say that the Reverend Matthew and Mrs. Cotton were the incumbents of the parish church of Cluhir (and had been profanely described as "the incumbrance of Cluhir"); even to speak of them as, respectively, its curate and its rector, might, though more accurate, be, perhaps, considered flippant. It would also be open to the reproach of lack of originality. Yet, unoriginal though the dominant clergywoman of fiction may be, it cannot be denied that St. Paul's injunctions in connection with the subjection of wives did not commend themselves to Mrs. Cotton. It may be, indeed, that her views on matrimony, being more instructed, were sounder than those of St. Paul, and she could at least argue that had he been acquainted with Mr. Cotton he might have modified them. In any case, whatever St. Paul might think about it, Mrs. Cotton was quite sure that she was better fitted than was her husband to deal with the matter that had brought them to Mount Music.

She did not, however, as becomes a sound tactician, ap-

proach the point with undue directness. Lady Isabel had sent her daughters to school in Paris; Lady Isabel had, on a bygone occasion, been goaded by Mrs. Cotton into a declaration that her servants' religion was a matter with which she only concerned herself if they neglected their religious duties. Mrs. Cotton, remembering these things, and being ever filled to brimming with what Christian had called The Spirit of the Nation, opened with a general attack upon the Church of Rome, and narrowed to a tale of "a friend of mine and Mr. Cotton's. A clergyman. A man of private means." After this stimulating prelude, the tale ceased for a moment, while Mrs. Cotton blinked her small black eyes at her hostess, several times, as was her practice. "Oh, a very wealthy man!" she continued, imposingly, "and he bought a lovely house, with a garden; a lovely garden!" The thought of a garden was a fortunate one, and enlisted Lady Isabel's wandering attention. "But at the end of the garden what was there but a Nunnery! And the clergyman found that his daughters were always slipping out into the garden, and what was it but the nuns, that were getting hold of the girls! Very refined women they were, and well able to deceive young girls!" The tale was flowing swiftly now, but Mrs. Cotton paused dramatically, and continued on a lower key. "The clergyman had had bookshelves made to fit the study, and a splendid antique sideboard to fitanitch——" Mrs. Cotton spoke fast, and the last three words ran bewilderingly into one. "But he sold the house AT ONCE! Yes, indeed, Lady Isabel! Weren't his daughters' souls more to him than bookshelves?"

Lady Isabel, who was still wrestling with the apparently Russian problem in connection with the antique sideboard, attempted no reply to this inquiry, and Mrs. Cotton, considering that her hostess' mind was now sufficiently prepared, did not wait for her opinion, and swept on to her objective, which was the denunciation of the conduct of the recent concert, and more especially of the disposition of the proceeds. "Of course, *I* don't know in whose hands it lay, Lady

Isabel," she said, raising her tea cup to her lips, and in order to do so curtaining it behind her ample veil, "but the Roman Catholics seemed to consider that it was *all* to go to them, and the paltry sum I have mentioned was all they gave Mr. Cotton and me for *our* charities!" Her black eyes snapped menacingly at Lady Isabel over the rim of the veiled tea cup.

Lady Isabel uttered a soothing and indefinite murmur, and the indictment proceeded.

"Considering that *your* family, Lady Isabel, took a leading part in the programme, and that I may say the greater number of the half-crown seats were Protestants, I *do* think that *our* Church——"

It avails not to follow Mrs. Cotton's diatribes further. Lady Isabel had lived for some five and twenty years in Ireland, but they had not sufficed to expound to her the intricacies of the web of jealousies, hatreds, fears, and stupidities, that has been spun by that intolerant Spirit of the Nation, in order to separate, as far as may be, the two Churches who divide the kindly people of the Island of Saints between them. Lady Isabel might see that in the distribution of the spoils Mrs. Cotton had possibly a lawful grievance, but she could not, even after five and twenty years, quite understand how solacing to the soul of Mrs. Cotton was the consideration of the wrongs endured by her Church.

"Yes, indeed, Lady Isabel! Not one penny more! And then Dr. Mangan to say to Mr. Cotton when I sent him to complain about it, that it was better than a poke in the eye with a blunt stick! That was by the way of making a joke of it! And that the Hunt wanted it more than we did! I wonder how much Father Greer left the Hunt!"

Again Mrs. Cotton's beady eyes snapped several times, in an emotion that was not far from enjoyment. The iniquities of Father Greer were very dear to her, and she was confident that in this matter of dividing the spoil he had not disappointed her.

Passing on from the concert, Mrs. Cotton dealt with many

subjects in a harangue that turned the seamy side of Cluhir to the sun, with the skill of a buyer of old clothes. Lady Isabel, behind the prisoning tea-table, after a hopeless, helpless glance round an assembly that was either preoccupied, or wilfully blind, relapsed into the brain stupor that was sometimes sent, like an anodyne, to those whom fate had consigned to Mrs. Cotton's keeping. The Reverend Matthew, in whom a prolonged course of his wife had developed a condition, when in her society, of semi-hypnotic trance, sat in silence at his hostess' side, devouring cake, and swallowing cups of tea, until what had apparently been starvation was averted; he then dreamily withdrew, and joined himself, vaguely, to the group of which Miss Coppinger formed one. Frederica's early training had, as has been said, implanted in her an ineradicable interest in the Church. Even the dulled, almost obliterated personality of Mr. Cotton still held for her some of the magic of his cloth. She moved her chair to admit him to the fellowship of which she was one, and offered him the seat that had been hastily vacated by Mrs. Kirby on his approach, with a darkling eye of reproof at that experienced lady.

Conversation with Mr. Cotton resembled conversation with his wife, in that it was apt to be one-sided, life having taught him to take the side not patronised by Mrs. Cotton. When, however, severed from her, he was capable of imparting rudimentary fragments of fact, and one of these he now offered to Miss Coppinger.

"I hear your nephew is the candidate chosen by the Nationalists here for the next election, Miss Coppinger," he said, his pale eyes regarding her drearily over the top of his spectacles.

Frederica sat erect in her chair with a jerk, and a hot red sprang, like a danger-signal, to her face.

"I've heard nothing of it," she said stoutly, but with a leaping heart of horror. "How do you know it is the case?"

"It is commonly reported in the town," replied Mr. Cotton. "One hears these things——"

"I can't believe it—I can't believe it," said Frederica; the colour had left her cheeks, and her eyes hurried from Mr. Cotton's face to Mrs. St. George's, and roved on to Mrs. Kirby, who was seated near, and had evidently felt the wind of the shot.

"Why, the boy is only just twenty-one!" said Mrs. Kirby, rolling herself and her chair back into action to the support of her friend. "With all deference to you, Mr. Cotton, I don't believe a word of it! Of course, Larry would have told you, Frederica! I can well believe that those Gaelic League people would like to have him if they can get him! Depend upon it, the wish is father to the thought!"

Frederica made no reply; her lips were tightly compressed, and her unseeing eyes, though they appeared to be fixed on Mrs. Kirby's broad and friendly face, were looking along the paths of memory to the time when that barrier of ice had not arisen between her and Larry.

"I understand that the suggestion emanated from Dr. Mangan," went on Mr. Cotton, faintly stimulated by his unaccustomed success. "I am not aware if young Mr. Coppinger has made any reply."

Mrs. Kirby put her plump white hand on Frederica's narrow knee. "I shouldn't distress myself if I were you, my dear," she said in a low voice. "Quite possibly it's all a mistake——" She turned to Mr. Cotton, who was relapsing into trance; his eyes had followed the movement of her hand, and were being held, hypnotically, by the sparkle of the diamonds in her rings. "At all events," went on Mrs. Kirby, "a general election now is very unlikely, and our valued member—upon my word, I don't even remember his name!—isn't likely to resign in Larry's favour, so we needn't discuss it now! I am sure, Mr. Cotton, that you will agree with me, that the less said about it the better; most probably the whole thing will die out and come to nothing!" She glanced at Mrs. St. George, and perceiving that the news had shattered her in only less degree than Frederica, she continued to address Mr. Cotton. "Such weather! Isn't

it? How does your garden like all this rain, Mr. Cotton? Our strawberries *won't* ripen, and as for the poor hay——! You really ought to have prayers for fine weather for us next Sunday!"

Mr. Cotton recalled his eyes from the diamonds with an effort. "I will, if you like, Mrs. Kirby!" he said, looking at her, like an old horse, down his long, deplorable nose, "but I fear they will be not of much use, as the glawss is remorkably low!"

Prayers for the modification of the weather are often treated as a permissible subject for mirth, and Mrs. Kirby availed herself of the convention; even Frederica and Mrs. St. George, stricken though they were, smiled wanly.

CHAPTER XXI

At about this time, that imposing spectacle, once described by Mrs. Twomey as "The Big Doctor and little Danny Aherne walking the streets of Cluhir like two paycocks," was vouchsafed to the town rather more frequently than was usually the case. Dr. Aherne had sent a patient, who was no less a person than the priest of the parish of Pribawn, to the private ward of the Infirmary in Cluhir, where he would, among other advantages, receive daily visits from Dr. Mangan. Father Sweeny was suffering from a broken leg, and other damages; a midnight drive to a dying parishioner had ended, disastrously, in an unguarded road-side ditch, and Dr. Aherne had thought it best to consign a patient of such importance to the care of hands less occupied, as well as of higher renown, than his own.

Thus it was that the Big Doctor and his kinsman saw more of each other than is often possible for men whose work is as widespread and incessant as is that of Irish Dispensary Doctors. On this windy June morning they had met in the dreary yard of the Workhouse, to which the Infirmary was attached, and together they paced the long, whitewashed, slate-paven passages that led to the Infirmary, pausing at intervals to talk of matters quite unconnected with their patients, but, if the frequency of the pauses, filled by the sibilant whispers of the little doctor, and the deep growls of the big one, was any criterion, none the less absorbing.

"His name's been accepted," ended the Big Doctor, after the lengthiest of these, "and it would be no harm for you to be slipping in a word, now and again, with the people through the country, according as you'd get the chance, Danny."

"I will, I will," replied the little doctor, as he opened the door of Father Sweeny's room.

"You're doing very well, Father," said Dr. Mangan, his inspection of the patient ended. "I consider you couldn't be progressing more satisfactorily." He seated himself by Father Tim Sweeny's bedside, while the Nursing Sister-in-Charge rolled up bandages, and conferred in lowered tones with Dr. Aherne, on the subject of what he called the patient's "dite."

"You'll be going as strong as ever you did in a few weeks' time," continued Dr. Mangan, encouragingly.

Father Sweeny returned the Doctor's look morosely.

"I'm sick and tired of being here as it is," he said, gloomily, "and you talk to me of weeks!"

"Ah, they'll pass, never fear they'll pass!" said the Big Doctor, cheerfully. "I never saw the weeks yet that didn't pass if you waited long enough! And I wouldn't say but that you mightn't go home before you're out of our hands entirely."

Father Sweeny received these consolations with an unpropitiated grunt. His large face, with its broad cheeks and heavy double-chins, that was usually of a sanguine and all pervasive beefy-red, now hung in pallid purple folds, on which dark bristles, that were as stiff as those on the barrel of a musical box, told that the luxury of shaving had hitherto been withheld. There are some professions that tend more than others to grade the men that follow them into distinct types. The Sea is one of these, the Church, and pre-eminently the Church of Rome, is another. The ecclesiastical types vary no less than the nautical ones, and neither need here be enumerated. It is sufficient to say that Father Sweeny, when in his usual robust health, in voice, in appearance, and in manner, provoked, uncontrollably, a comparison with a heavy and truculent black bull.

"'Tis highly inconvenient to me to be boxed up in bed this way, at this time," said Father Sweeny, with a small hot eye upon his attendant nun that would have said instantly

to any one less entirely kind, religious, and painstaking, that he had no immediate need of her services; "Sister Maria Joseph, I wonder would you be so kind as to bring me the paper? I didn't see it to-day at all."

Sister Maria Joseph turned her amiable, unruffled face, with that pure complexion that would seem to be one of the compensations for the renunciation of the world, towards her patient, and said, obsequiously:

"I beg your pordon, Fawther?"

The little eyes had a hotter sparkle as Father Sweeny repeated his request.

"It's a wonder to me," he growled to Dr. Mangan, after Sister Maria Joseph had left the room, having taken, in her anxiety to show respect, quite half a minute in closing the door with suitable noiselessness, "why people can't attend to what's said to them! If there's a thing I hate, it's being bothered repeating an entirely trivial matter, which——" —here Father Tim's voice began to take on the angry, high tenor of one of his prototypes—"she had a right to have heard at the first offer! I declare I'm beside meself sometimes with the annoyance I get!"

Dr. Mangan laid his spatulate fingers upon the sufferer's hairy wrist.

"We'll have to give his Reverence a sedative, Danny," he said, winking at his colleague. "I'd be sorry to see you that way, Father; the bed's narrow enough for you as it is, without having you beside yourself in it!"

Father Sweeny's mood was one to which chaff did not commend itself. He snatched his hand from beneath the Doctor's fingers, and picked up some letters that lay beside him.

"Look at this, I ask you! From Mary Murphy, saying her husband is quite well, and that he took the turn for good from the minute he was anointed! And me lying here crippled!"

"'The dog it was that died!'" quoted Dr. Mangan, smoothly.

"What dog?" demanded Father Sweeny, with indignation, "I d'no what you're talking about!"

"Ah, nothing, nothing," said the Big Doctor, with a lift of the spirit at the thought of his superior culture, "but surely it wasn't to show me Mary Murphy's letter that you sent poor Sister Maria Joseph on a fool's errand?"

"Why a fool's errand?" demanded the now incensed Father Sweeny. "What d'ye mean?"

"Look at the newspaper on the floor here," returned the Doctor. "You'll have her back in a minute, begging your pardon again, to tell you so."

Father Sweeny glared, speechless, at his tormentor for an instant; then, finding the Big Doctor unmoved "in the furnace of his look," he fell back on his pillows.

"Lock the door!" he commanded angrily. He pushed a letter into the Doctor's hand. "Read that!"

"Hullo! The Major! What's *he* got to say to you, Father Tim?"

"Read it, I tell you!"

Dr. Mangan did so, with attention, and read it a second time before he replaced it in its envelope and handed it back to the priest.

"That's a nice letter!" said Father Sweeny, with a snort that he believed to be a laugh. "What d'ye think of that now, you that are so fond of Protestants!"

"I think the man is justified," said the Doctor, stoutly. "There's no such great hurry, and anyhow, his authority is at an end. He couldn't give you as much as'd sod a lark now——"

"Nor he wouldn't if he could!" broke in Father Sweeny. "And there *is* hurry, and great hurry! How will I build my chapel without the land to put it on? Will you tell me that?"

"Ah, you haven't the money gathered yet. The delay isn't worth exciting yourself about!" said the Doctor, soothingly. Father Tim amused him, and he liked him, being well aware that if his temper was hot, his heart was cor-

respondingly warm. "You'll see the young chap will give you the site as soon as look at you."

"And how do I know the young chap will be any easier than the old one? Isn't he there at Mount Music all day and every day, at their tea-parties and their dinner-parties? Won't they have him married up to one of the daughters before you can look around? He may call himself a Catholic, but them English Catholics—COME IN!"

Sister Maria Joseph's faint tap at the door had as instant an effect as a squib, planted in the mane of the monarch of the bull-ring, might produce.

"I cannt—the door's locked, Fawther!" came Sister Maria Joseph's gentle voice, in mild protest. "I couldn't find the——"

"Never mind it! I have it myself—*I have it,* I tell you!" shouted Father Tim; in his voice the appeal to a merciful Heaven to grant patience was unmistakable.

Sister Maria Joseph, recognising with trembling her superfluousness, withdrew.

"It's Barty will have that job we were speaking of just now, before you were coaxing Sister Maria Joseph to go away from you," resumed Dr. Mangan. "Maybe you didn't hear he's got the Coppinger's Court Agency? Young Coppinger offered it to him yesterday."

"It's a good thing it's out of Talbot-Lowry's hands anyhow," growled Father Sweeny.

"Larry's up at my house every day now, about a concert they're to have," went on the Doctor, tranquilly. "Tishy's helping him. He's very fond of music. I think you're mistaken in thinking he'll be married to one of the Major's daughters in such a hurry!"

"The first thing he'll want to do is to tidy up his property and pacify the tenants," said Dr. Aherne, in his small, piping voice. "They're not too pleased with the way they are now. The Major was rather short with some of them, now and again. There was Herlihy, and two of the Briens, was talking to me and saying what would they do at all with

Father Tim here, away. They were thinking would Father Hogan——"

"Br-r-r-r-r-h!"

As a bull shakes his head, with a reverberating roar at the foes he cannot reach, so did Father Tim Sweeny, crippled and furious, roll his big head, growling, on his pillows. His dark hair lay in tight rings on his broad and bulging forehead, and curled in strength over his head back to the tonsure. His eyes were congested with the unavailing rage that possessed him, as he thought of his parish left leaderless.

Had the "Ballad of the Bull" then been written, and had Dr. Mangan been acquainted with it (which seems unlikely) he might have again proved his culture by remembering the injunction to pity "this fallen chief," as he saw the impotent wrath in Father Tim's bovine countenance.

"Don't worry yourself now, Father," he said, consolingly, "I'll undertake to say it will be all right about the site for the chapel, and what's more, I'll undertake to say there'll be nothing done about it, or the tenants, or anything else, till you're well. The people will do nothing without you!"

He looked at his huge, old-fashioned gold watch.

"Oh, b' Jove, I must be off! Tell me, did you hear they have Larry Coppinger chosen to be the candidate, when Prendergast retires, as he says he will, before the next election? There won't be much talk of tea-parties for Larry at Mount Music then! Any tea-party there that he'd go to once he was a Nationalist M.P., I think he'd be apt to get 'his tay in a mug!'"

The Doctor got up and moved towards the door.

"I'll support him, so!" Father Sweeny called after him.

CHAPTER XXII

THERE are families, as there are nations, that are like those ships that, launched under a lucky star, sail their appointed courses ever serenely and eventlessly, and though they may indeed look on tempests, yet are never shaken by them. But of such was not, it must regretfully be said, the family of Talbot-Lowry. It can only be supposed that the gods had preordained its destruction, for on no other assumption can the dementia of its chief representative be comprehended.

It would be out of place, even, if not impertinent, absurd, to discuss here the Act of Parliament that in the year nineteen hundred and three, made provision to change the ownership of Irish land, and to transfer its possession from the landlords to the tenants. It is sufficient to say that those of both classes who were endowed with the valuable quality of knowing on which side of a piece of bread the butter had been applied, lost as little time as was possible in availing themselves of the facilities that the Act offered them. The ceremony of Hari Kiri, even if entered upon with the belief that it will lead to another and a better world, is not an agreeable one, but it was obvious to most Irish landlords that, with bad or good grace, sooner or later, that grim rite had to be faced, and that the hindmost in the transaction need expect only the fate proverbially promised to such. It is, possibly, superfluous to say that of the company of the hindmost was our poor friend, well-meaning and stupid Dick Talbot-Lowry, and also that his fate, as such, was sedulously pointed out to him by those friends of his own class, who, like the fabled fox, having lost their brushes, were eager in explanation of the superiority of their position.

"I don't own a stick outside my own demesne wall!" says Colonel St. George. "Of all the hundreds of acres of mountain that my father had, there isn't as much as one patch of bog left that I could cut a sod of turf in!"

This whisk of a vanished brush was a gesture well calculated to enrage Major Dick. It was senseless of St. George to boast of his limitations, and yet no one better than Dick knew what must be the feeling of emancipation that prompted the boast.

Autocracy dies hard, and it is probable that long after Leagues of Nations have decreed the abolition of all Rulers, the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table will still, in the most inveterate Republics, issue, unquestioned, his unalterable edicts, with his coat-tails monopolising the dining-room fire, and the family income concentrated in his cheque book. Dick Talbot-Lowry's pigheadedness was at the root of the downsliding of Mount Music. Having faced, undaunted, deputations of his tenants; deputations of public bodies; ("Damned interfering blackguards, who ought to be taught to mind their own business!"), having made light of advice from his friends, and of anonymous threatening letters from, presumably, his enemies, he still held fast, and refused to sell the property that had come to him from the men whose portraits had looked down on him from the old walls of Mount Music, all the days of his life. It was, perhaps, the solitary strand of romance in his nature, the feudal feeling that the Mount Music tenants were his, as they had been his ancestors', to have and to hold, to rule, to arbitrate for, and to stand by, as a fond and despotic husband rules and stands by an obedient wife, loving her and bullying her (but both entirely for her good). He had, moreover, the desire to disparage and to disprove new ideas, that is a sign of a mind incapable of originality, and anxious to assert itself negatively, since it must otherwise remain silent.

"But Dick," his friends would say, "there isn't a property this side of the county that isn't sold, except your own!"

"What's that to me?" says Dick, as stubborn and stupid

a King Canute as ever sat with the tide nearing the tops of his hunting-boots; "I don't care a damn what anybody else does! And what's more," he would add, gloomily, *"I* can't afford to sell at seventeen years' purchase. Anyhow, what's mine's my own! I'll be shot if I'll be bullied!"

"I wouldn't be at all surprised if you were!" the friends would reply darkly.

To sell at seventeen years' purchase, was what Mr. St. Lawrence Coppinger had done, following the advice of his agent and solicitor, Mr. Bartholomew Mangan, and his cousin, and late guardian, Major Talbot-Lowry, had found it hard to forgive him. The business had been arranged while Larry was in Paris, and the expostulations that might have prevailed if delivered *viva voce,* failed of their effect when presented on foreign paper, in Cousin Dick's illegible scrawl. It was all very fine for Larry, ran the illegible scrawl, to talk of selling at such a price, but he ought to see what a hole his doing so put his neighbours in! Larry hadn't a squad of incumbrances, and charges, and mortgages, hung round his neck like leeches (and no fault of the Major's). He had had to find money in a hurry to pay off one of these cursed things only the other day, and if he hadn't had the luck to mention it to a friend, who was kind enough to come to the rescue (of course on good security) the Major would have been in a hat, or a hole, Larry couldn't quite read which.

These grievances, and much more, illegibly scrawled on foreign paper, with a quill pen. Larry, swallowed up in the absorbing, isolating life of a Paris studio, would put the letters half-read, in his pocket, and would immediately forget all about them. After all, he couldn't interfere with Barty; he was the man at the helm, and mustn't be talked to. Also it was idiotic to keep a dog and bark yourself. Proverbial philosophy is a recognised sedative; Larry gave himself a dose or two, and straightway forgot Cousin Dick, forgot Ireland, forgot even that gratifying nomination of himself as Nationalist candidate for the Division, and

plunged back into the burning atmosphere of art, wherein models and professors, cliques and cabals, glow, and seethe, and exist intensely, and with as little reference to the affairs of the outside world, as if they were the sole occupants of a distant and much over-heated star.

There are many people who have been endowed with one master-passion, that "like Aaron's serpent swallows up the rest," but Larry's ingenuous breast harboured a nest of such serpents. During his three years at Oxford, he had stormed from one enthusiasm to another; he had rowed, and boxed, and spouted politics, and, beginning with music, had stormed on through poetry and the drama, to painting.

Having taken a moderate degree, he had rushed in pursuit of this latest charmer to Paris, and the waters of the Quartier Latin then closed over him. Occasionally a bubble would rise from those clouded deeps, and a letter to Aunt Freddy, or to Barty Mangan, would briefly announce his continued existence. Sometimes he wrote to Christian, and would expand a little more to her; telling her of how one Professor had remarked of his work that it was now *presque pas mal,* and that this dizzying encomium had encouraged him to begin a *Salon* (its subject described at length, with elucidatory sketches); further, that he had taken a very jolly *atelier,* and "dear old Chose" was "on the Jury," and would try and get him accepted, with much more to the same effect, music, politics, horses and hounds, forgotten as though they had never been.

Christian received these effusions with a characteristic mixture of respect for the artistic effort that they described, and of amused, almost pitying comprehension of the enthusiasm that they revealed. It was three years since Larry had left Oxford and gone to France, and during those years Christian had learned more of life than Larry had acquired, or would ever acquire, in spite of the three years' start of her with which he had begun the world.

Judith had been induced to close her brilliant career as a buccaneer, by a perfectly, even—from the buccaneering

point of view—depressingly satisfactory marriage with Mr. William Kirby, and her departure had forced her younger sister into the front rank of domestic combatants. At Mount Music, where once the milk and honey had flowed with effortless abundance, each year brought increasing stress. The rents grew less, the expenses greater, that large and omnivorous item, known as "keeping up the place," was as exacting as ever, the minor problems of household existence more acute. There had been a time when the Mount Music tenants had vied with one another in the provision of sons and daughters for service in the Big House, when bonfires had blazed for the return of "the young gentlemen," and offerings of eggs had greeted "the young ladies." Now the propitiatory turkey that heralded a request, the goose that signalised a success, gained with the help of the hereditary helpers, had all ceased. Alien influences had poisoned the wells of friendship. Such rents as were paid were extracted by the hard hand of the law, and the tenants held indignation meetings against the landlord who refused to resign to them what they believed to be theirs, and he was equally convinced was his. Major Dick still shot and fished, as was his right, over the lands and waters that were still in his name, but the tenants, whose fathers had loved him, had renounced the old allegiance. The partridges were run down by the greyhounds that had killed off the hares; the salmon were poached; worst of all, Derrylugga Gorse, the covert that Dick had planted twenty-five years ago, on Carmody's farm, in the middle of the best of the Broadwater Vale country, was burned down, and a vixen and her cubs had perished with it.

Dick gave up the hounds at the end of the season.

"I've done my best to show sport for five and twenty years," he said, "and I'm not going to spoil it now!"

It is impossible to deny that for Dick's wife this sacrifice had its consolatory aspects. It was a long time now since there had been quite enough money for anything at Mount Music. Those far-sighted guardian angels who had compelled

the investment of Lady Isabel's dowry in gilt-edged securities, had placed the care of these in the hands of hide-bound English trustees (the definition is Major Dick's) and the amiable reader need therefore have no anxieties that starvation threatened this well-meaning family, but, as Lady Isabel frequently said, "what with the Boys, and Judith's trousseau, and the Wedding, and One-Thing-and-Another" (which last is always a big item in the domestic budget) the more common needs of every day had to submit to very drastic condensation, and it was indisputable that the Talbot-Lowry family-coach was running on the down-grade.

The law of averages is a stringent one, and it may be assumed with reasonable certainty, that when one ancient and respectable family-coach runs down hill, another vehicle, probably of more modern equipment, will go up. In the case under consideration, the operations of this principle were less obscure than is sometimes the way with them. As Mount Music descended, so did No. 6, The Mall, Cluhir, rise, and Dr. Mangan's growing prosperity compensated Fate for the decline in Major Talbot-Lowry's affairs, with a precision that, to a person interested in the statistics of averages, might have seemed beautiful. The Big Doctor was now the leading man in Cluhir, leader in its councils and its politics. On his professional side, his advice and ministrations were in demand even beyond the range of his motor car, and the measure of his greatness may be best estimated when it is mentioned that his motor had been the first to startle the streets of his native town.

Major Talbot-Lowry was of the Old Guard, who, in those now far away times, swore never to surrender to what he held to be so thoroughly unsportsmanlike an innovation as a motor car, and the Doctor was accustomed to offer facetious apologies when he and his car drew up at the Mount Music hall door. This had become a fairly frequent occurrence. Dick was not the man he had been. When his hounds went, old age came, and it came like an illness, bewilderingly, unexpectedly. Dick's long, straight legs began

to give at the knees, and his square shoulders learned the hollow curve of the back of his armchair, and submitted to it. His long sight, that had outlived the infliction of spectacles for reading, was failing him; he had twice tally-ho'd away a yellow cur-dog, at less than a field's distance.

"No, Mangan, I'll be damned if I go out to make a fool of myself and the hounds!" he said, when reproached by the Doctor for staying at home. "The sooner I'm put down like an old hound, the better!"

Dr. Mangan had been equal to the occasion, and had assured Dick that Bill Kirby was "lost altogether" for want of his counsels, and that the whole field were saying the Major was the only man to show sport, and that he knew the way a fox'd run, as well as if he was inside him!

"In company with another old gander, I suppose!" says poor Dick, with tears in his eyes, being both moved and cheered by his own jest.

The Doctor's presence was partly a reassurance and partly a menace, to Major Dick. There had been, from time to time, further opportunities for the investment of the Doctor's "spare ha'pence" in "something solid and safe, like land." Aunt Bessie Cantwell's money, for instance, had, on her demise, all come Dr. Mangan's way. There was no need for the Major to think there was any obligation, he might call it a mutual advantage, if he liked, anyhow, why shouldn't the money go where it was wanted? The security was all right.

"Oh yes," says Dick, "that's right enough, and whenever I can come to terms with the tenants——"

"No hurry!" the Big Doctor would answer; "five per cent. is good enough for me!"

The Doctor, alone of all Dick's friends, sympathised with Major Talbot-Lowry in the matter of the tenants, and he condemned the conduct of his own son, Barty, as heartily as did Dick that of his nephew, in their dealings with the Coppinger estate.

"'Tis impossible to hold these young fellows," he said,

severely, while he and Dick strolled slowly round the weedy flower garden of Mount Music, one sunny August afternoon, four years after Larry's coming of age; "You may be sure that I pointed out to Barty that he and Larry were playing the deuce with you over the sale, but what could I do? After all, Barty had to obey the orders he got from his boss!"

"I know, I know," responded Dick. "My dear fellow, I don't blame *you,* my own cousin's a different pair of shoes! Richard may fight it out with the tenants when I'm gone. He'll have to marry money. Why, my God! If I sold at these fellows' price, the property would hardly clear itself! At least," Dick cleared his throat and picked himself up with a guilty jerk, as does a horse who stumbles from carelessness, "at least, it would cover the charges, and—and the mortgages of course—but not much more——"

Dr. Mangan looked straight in front of him, as became a mortgagee of delicate feeling, and said with some elaborateness, "No man need be anxious about money whose security is Irish land, nowadays. 'Tis daily appressiating in value."

"To every man except the owner!"

Dick struck hard with his ash-plant at a tall weed as he spoke, and decapitated it with the grace and dexterity of the old cavalryman. He put force enough into the cut to have felled a tougher foe.

"This place is turned into a wilderness——" he went on and then, staggering, caught at the Doctor's thick arm.

In an instant the Big Doctor had his other arm round Dick's shoulders, and held him firm.

"Stand still, Major, it's nothing! You'll be all right in a minute!" he said, meeting Dick's frightened eyes with reassuring steadiness. "The sun's very hot. It's only a touch of giddiness——"

He stood, a great rock of support, uttering leisurely words of consolation, while he quietly slipped one hand down the Major's arm, until his broad, perceptive finger-tips could feel the faint pulse jerking under their pressure.

Dick's colour crept back, and the veins, that had shown blue on the sudden yellow of his cheek, began to lose their vividness.

"That's more like it!" said the Doctor, tranquilly. "Do you sit quite here for a minute, now, and I'll go get you a drop of something from our friend, Mr. Evans, that'll do you no harm!"

He established his patient on a garden seat, and left him, moving slowly until he knew he was no longer in sight; then he swung into the house, with swift strides that would have compelled a smaller man to run, if he were to keep level with him.

"Poor old lad!" he thought, compassionately; yet, blended with the compassion, was the half-unconscious triumph of strong middle-age at sight of the failure of a senior. "That's the first knock. He'll want to mind himself from this out —the next one might hit him harder."

CHAPTER XXIII

The back stairs at Mount Music were old and precipitous. To descend them at high noon demanded circumspection; at night, when the armies of the cockroaches were abroad, and marauding rats came flopping up and down them, upon their unlawful occasions, only that man of iron, Robert Evans, was proof to their terrors. Christian, even though inured from childhood to the backstairs, held her habit skirt high, and thanked heaven for her riding-boots, as she made her way down the worn stone steps, at some half-past four of a September morning.

Mount Music was one of the many houses of its period that, with, to quote Mrs. Dixon, "the globe of Ireland to build over," had elected to bestow its menials in dark and complex basements. Christian and her candle traversed the long maze of underground passages. The smell of past cooking was in the air, the black and evil glitter of cockroaches twinkled on the walls on either hand. This was the horrible part of subbing, thought Christian, and told herself that nothing but the thought of seeing the *début* of Dido, the puppy that she had walked, would compensate her for facing the cockroaches.

As she opened the kitchen door she was surprised to find a lighted lamp on the table. In the same glance she caught a glimpse of a figure, retreating hastily, with slippered shuffle, followed by the trailing tappings of braces off duty. On one end of the long kitchen table was seated a cat, in motionless meditation, like a profile in an Egyptian hieroglyphic; at the other end was a steaming cup of cocoa and plateful of bread and butter.

"Long life to Evans!" thought Christian, seating herself,

like the cat, on the edge of the table, and entering upon the cocoa.

"Miss Christian!" a raven-croak came through a slit of the pantry-door; "keep off the Carmodys' land! Mind now what I'm tellin' you!" The slit ceased.

"Thank you for the cocoa, Evans, but why must I?" called Christian, in a breath.

A lower croak, that seemed to end with the words "black papishes," came through the closed door.

"Old lunatic!" thought Christian; she drank the cocoa, and putting out the lamp, groped her way to the back-door. It opened on a shrieking hinge, and she was out into a pale grey dawn, pure and cold, with the shiver and freshness of new life in it.

The Mount Music stable yard was an immense square, with buildings round its four sides, and a high, ivy-covered battlemented wall surrounding and overlooking all. In the middle of the yard was an island of grass, on which grew three wide-armed and sombre Irish yews, dating, like the walls, from the days of Queen Elizabeth. Weeds were growing in the gravel of the wide expanse; more than one stable-door dropped on broken hinges under its old cut-stone pediments; the dejection of a faded and remembered prosperity lay heavy on all things in the thin, cold air of that September dawn.

The clatter of a horse's hoofs came cheerfully from a stable, and, as Christian crossed the yard, a dishevelled young man, with a large red moustache, put his head over the half-door.

"I'm this half-hour striving to girth her, Miss," he complained, "she got very big entirely on the grass; the surcingle's six inches too short for her, let alone the way she have herself shwoll up agin me!"

Charles, once ruler and lawgiver, was dead, and, with the departure of the hounds, Major Dick's interest in the stables had died too; his tall, grey horse was ending his days in bondage to the outside car; the meanest of the underlings

who had grovelled beneath Charles' top-boots, was now in sole charge, and had grown a moustache, unchecked; and Christian's only mount was a green four-year-old filly, in whom she had invested the economies of a life-time, with but a dubious chance of their recovery.

"Can't you get a bit of string and tie up the surcingle, Tommy?" suggested Christian, who was now too well used to these crises in the affairs of the stable to be much moved by them.

"Sure, I'm after doing it, Miss. T'would make a cat laugh the ways I have on it! She's a holy fright altogether with the mane and the tail she have on her! I tried to pull them last night, and she went up as straight as a ribbon in the stable!"

The flushed face and red moustache were withdrawn, and with considerable clattering and shouting, the holy fright was led forth. She was a small and active chestnut mare, with a tawny fleece, a mane like a prairie fire, and a tail like a comet. Her impish eyes expressed an alarm that was more than half simulated, and the task of manœuvring her into position beside the mounting block, was comparable only to an endeavour to extract a kitten from under a bed with the lure of a reel of cotton. An apple took the place of the reel of cotton, and its consumption afforded Christian just time enough to settle herself in her saddle. Since the days of Harry the Residue Christian had ridden many and various horses, and she had a reputation for making the best of a bad job that had often earned her mounts from those who, wishing to sell a horse as a lady's hunter, were anxious to impart some slight basis of fact into the transaction.

Tommy Sullivan watched her admiringly.

"Where's the meet, Miss?" he said, quickly, as she started, and as if he were struck by a sudden thought.

"Nad Wood."

"If they run the Valley, Miss, mind out for wire!" called Tommy after her, as she rode out of the yard. "Carmody's fences are strung with it!"

He ran to the gate to watch the mare as she capered and plunged sideways along the drive, and thanked God, not for the first time, for the heavy hands that preserved him from the duty of riding Miss Christian's horses.

Christian rode past the long ivy-covered face of the house, that stared at her with the wall-eyed glare of shuttered windows, and down the long avenue, that curved submissive to the windings of the Onwashee, now black and brimming after a week of rain. Young cattle, that had slept, according to their custom, on the roadway, scrambled up as she came near, and crashed away through the evergreens, whose bared lower branches bore witness to their depredations. They were a sight hateful to Christian, who, in spite of her resignation to the methods of her groom, cherished a regard for tidiness that she had often found was more trouble than it was worth.

She let Nancy, the chestnut mare, have her head, a privilege that made short work of the remaining half-mile of avenue, and soon the stones and mud of the high road were flying behind her, as the little mare, snatching at her bridle, and neglecting no opportunity for a shy, fretted on towards the sunrise, and the covert that lay, purple, on a long hill, three miles away.

Bill Kirby's foible was not punctuality; when Christian arrived at the appointed cross-roads in the middle of Nad Wood she found a patient little group of three or four men, farmers, all of them, she thought, waiting under the dewy branches of the beeches for the arrival of the hounds. One of them rode quickly from the group to meet her. A young man, with a slight figure and square shoulders, who was riding a long-legged bay horse, that, like its rider, was unknown to Christian. The light under the beech trees was dim and green, and such faint illumination as the grey and quiet sky afforded, was coming, like this rider, to meet Christian. He was close to her before he spoke, then he caught his cap off his head and waved it, and shouted:

"Hurrah, Christian! Here I am! Home again! Don't

pretend you never saw me before, because I won't stand swagger from you!"

"Larry! Not you? Not really?"

He had her hand by this time, and was shaking it wildly, despite the resentment of the chestnut mare, at the sudden proximity of the bay horse.

"Yes! Me all right! *Moi qui vous parle*—as we say in French Paris! I only got home last night. I bought this chap at Sewell's on my way through. He's a County Limerick horse. I bet he's a goer! How do you like him?"

It was like Larry to require, instantly, praise and recognition for his new purchase, but Christian wasn't thinking of the horse. Her wide, clear eyes were fixed on his rider, her mind was a hustle of questions.

Had he changed? Would he stay? Did he know that he was "in black books" with her father? Would he care if he did know? What ages it seemed——! Four years, wasn't it? Her brain was working too hard to remember, but she certainly remembered that he had not had a moustache when he was last at home; such a fanciful little French scrap of a moustache as it was too, made of pure gold!

"I rather like it, Larry!" she said, beaming at him; *"quite* nice!"

"What? What's quite nice?" says Larry, beaming back; "oh, *this?"* He gave the moustache an extra upward twist. "Yes, rather so! Beats the Kaiser's to fits, I flatter myself! I'm glad you like it, but I don't see how you could help it!"

Yes! This was the old Larry, the right one; Christian felt very glad. It might so easily have been some one else, some one not half so nice as her own old Larry.

"Why on earth didn't you say you were coming? Cousin Freddy told us that you were painting at Étaples."

"So I was till one fine day I 'took the notion for to cross the raging ocean,' and I'm jolly glad I did too! Oh, by Jove! Look at old Bill and the hounds! What a swell! Christian, do you know I haven't seen a hound for four

years! Do you mind if I call them 'dogs,' just till I get used to them a bit?"

There are few bonds more enduring than those that are woven round the playmates of childhood. In how many raids had Larry not been Christian's trusted leader! What stolen dainties had they not shared, what punishments not endured together! Larry's three years of seniority had only deepened the reverence and loyalty that he had inspired in his youngest follower; he had never presumed upon them; he had been a chieftain worthy of homage, and he had had all Christian's. There are some people who appear to change their natures when they grow up. They may have been pleasing as little boys or girls; they may be equally agreeable as men and women, but there is no continuity and no development. They have become new creatures. Christian, alone of her family, was essentially as she had ever been, and, being of those whose inward regard is as searching as their outward observation, she knew it. Now, Larry had come back again, and in half-a-dozen sentences she knew that neither had he changed, and that with him her ancient leader had returned.

The Wood of Nad (which, being interpreted, means a nest) filled a pocket on the side of Lissoughter Hill, and had thence spread over the crest of the hill, and ended near the cross-roads at which the hounds had met.

"Don't holloa away an old fox. I want to kill a cub if I can. I'll let you know if the hounds get away below. You needn't be afraid I won't! Open the gate!"

Thus, magisterially, the Master, standing at the gate into the wood, with the hounds crushing round his horse's heels. "'Leu in there!"

With a squeal or two of excitement from Dido and her brethren-puppies, the hounds squeezed through the narrow gateway, and were swallowed up by the wood.

Larry returned to Christian's side.

"I hate not seeing Cousin Dick out," he began; "what a pity he gave 'em up! Why did he? You know, Christian,

you were pretty rotten about writing to me! Aunt Freddy never tells me a thing about the Hunt! I didn't even know Cousin Dick had chucked till I saw it in *The Field.*"

Larry was staring at Christian as he spoke. He, like her, was searching for his former comrade; but, unlike her, was doing so unconsciously, as Larry did most things: What he believed himself to be doing was appraising her appearance from a painter's point of view. He found he had forgotten her eyes. He tried to think of them in terms of paint; *Brun de Bruxelles,* and a touch of cadmium, or was it *Verte Émeraude?* Hang it! How can paint do more than suggest the colours of a sunlit moorland pool? Was it the white hunting-tie that gave that special "value" to her face? He had forgotten how delicious in tone was the faint colour that just tinted her cheek; so hopeless a word as pink was not to be thought of; just a hint of *Rose Garance dorée* might do it. And to get the drawing of those subtle outlines, the ineffable refinement of all her features. Larry put his head on one side, and screwed up his eyes (remembering faithfully the injunctions of "dear old Chose," *en clignant bien les yeux*) and said to himself that she would put dear old Chose himself to his trumps, and then maybe he wouldn't get her right!

Aloud he said, peremptorily and professionally:

"Christian, I'm going to paint you! Eight o'clock at the studio to-morrow morning, *Ma'mselle, s'il vous plait!*"

Christian's response was closured by a wild outcry from the wood, hounds and horn lifting up their voices together in sudden delirium. Old horses pricked their ears, and young ones, and notably, Nancy, began to fret and to fidget. Some one said, unnecessarily: "That's him!" A man, farther down the road, turned his horse, and standing in his stirrups, stared over the wall into the thick covert, rigid as a dog setting his game. Then he held up his hat, and, a moment later, something brown glided, with the fluent swiftness of a fish in a stream, across the road and over the opposite wall. The scream that followed him was not needed; was,

indeed, hardly heard in the crashing, clashing clamour of the pack, as they came pitching headlong over the wall of the wood, and hurling themselves at the opposite wall. It was high, and had a coped top, and the yelling hounds broke against it, and fell, like waves against a cliff. A couple achieved it, and the anguish of their comrades, as they heard them go away, full-cry, on the line, redoubled. In the same instant, Larry was off his tall bay. He flung his reins to Christian, and was into the struggling pack. It is no easy matter to heave a hound over a high wall, but Larry and a young farmer had somehow shoved over four couple, before Bill Kirby and his whipper-in came and swept the remainder to a place of possible entrance a little further on.

Larry snatched his plunging horse from Christian, and started to gallop before he was fairly in the saddle, kicking his right foot into the stirrup as he went, and shouting gratitude to Christian for having held the horse. It had not been easy. Nancy had proved the accuracy of her groom's statement by again "going up as straight as a ribbon" when the hounds crossed the road, and the bay had not been backward in emulating her efforts. Bill Kirby had had luck; the fox had run left-handed under the wall, and the leading hounds met the Master, with the body of the pack, at the verge of the wood on its farther side. A bank, pitted with rabbit-holes, a space of stony lane with a pole at its farther end, and Nad Wood was a thing of the past.

Outside, a fair stretch of grass presented itself, falling in mild gradients to the banks of the Broadwater, sprinkled with cattle, dotted with groups of trees clustering round white farm houses, from whose chimneys the thin, blue lines of the smoke of morning fires were just beginning to ascend.

But few are able to spare much thought for others during a first burst out of covert, their strictly personal affairs being as sufficient for them as is the day's share of good and evil for the day; but Larry, looking often over his shoulder as he galloped, did not fail to note, despite his engrossment in his new purchase, the ease and competence that marked

Christian's dealings with the chestnut mare, to whom the twin gifts of imagination and invention had been lavishly granted. It has been ingeniously said that the enemy of the aboriginal horse was a creature of about the size of a dinner-plate, that lay hidden in grass; nothing less than a concealed dinner-service would have sufficed to account for the mysterious alarms that repeatedly swept Nancy from her course; wafting her, like a leaf, sideways from a stream, impelling her to swing, from the summit of a bank, back to the field from which she had wildly sprung; suggesting to her that safety from the besetting dangers could alone be secured by following the bay horse (whom, after the manner of young horses, she had adopted as a father) so closely, and at such a rate of speed, that a live torpedo attached to his tail could hardly have been a less desirable companion.

At a momentary check, an elderly farmer, many of whose horses had owed to Christian their first introduction to a side saddle, spoke to her.

"For God's sake, Miss Christian," he said, fervently, "go home with that mare! She's very peevish! I wouldn't like to be looking at her! She has that way of jumping stones her nose'd nearly reach the ground before her feet!"

"Never fear that young lady's able for her!" struck in another farmer, the former owner of Nancy. "How well yourself'd be asking her to be riding nags that couldn't see the way that little mare'd go! Didn't I see her go mountains over the stone gap awhile ago? And yourself seen the same, John Kearney!"

"If it was mountains and pressy-pices that was in it itself," returned John Kearney, severely, "I'd say the same, Michael Donovan. Miss Christian knows me, and I'm telling her——"

At this point, however, Christian's attention was absorbed by Dido, who was comporting herself with precocious zeal, and, an instant after, the dispute was ended by the shriek with which she proclaimed her success. For some fifteen minutes the hounds ran hard and fast; Nancy began to settle

down, and to realise that her adopted parent invariably changed feet on a bank, and never jumped stones as if he were a cork bursting perpendicularly from a bottle of champagne. The fox was taking them through the best of the Broadwater Vale country; pasture-field followed pasture-field, in suave succession, the banks were broad and benevolent, the going clean and firm. The sun had just risen, and was throwing the long blue shadows of the hedge-row trees on the dew-grey grass. The river valley was full of silver mists, changing and thinning, like the visions of a *clairvoyant,* yielding slowly the beauty of the river, and of its garlanding trees, to those who had eyes to see. The sky became bluer each instant as the sun rushed up, and Bill Kirby said to himself that the hunt was too good to last, and the scent would soon be scorched out.

Not long afterwards came the check. The fox had run through a strip of plantation, and in the succeeding field the scent failed. It was a wide pasture-field, in which a number of young cattle were running, snorting, bellowing, and gathering themselves into defensive groups at the unwonted sight of hounds.

"That's a nice little plan of a mare!" said the young farmer who had helped Larry with the hounds, drawing up beside Christian, "and you have her in grand condition, Miss; she's as round as a bottle! She has a great jump in her!" he went on. "She fled the last fence entirely; she didn't leave an iron on it! She was hopping off the ground like a ball!"

"That was no credit to her!" said John Kearney, eyeing the mare and her rider gloomily.

"'Twas a sweet gallop altogether," said Nancy's former owner, addressing Christian, and ignoring Mr. Kearney's challenge, "and the mare carried you to fortune! But sure it'd be as good for you to take her home now, Miss Christian, she has enough done. The fences from this out aren't too good at all." He cast a glance at Kearney.

"Faith, and that's true for you," said Kearney quickly,

"Be said by us now, Miss Christian, and go home. The road isn't but two fields back. The hounds'll do no more good, sure the sun's too strong."

"Where are we?" broke in Larry, joining the group; "I've lost my bearings."

"Them's the Carmodys' bounds, sir," said Michael Donovan in a colourless voice, indicating the next fence.

"Carmody's?" said Larry. "Then isn't the Derrylugga gorse somewhere hereabouts? I see he's casting them ahead."

"It's burnt down," said Christian, hurriedly. Something in her face checked Larry's exclamation. In Ireland people learn to be silent on a very imperceptible hint.

The farmers moved away. Said Michael Donovan in a low voice to John Kearney:

"Will she go back, d'ye think?"

"I d'no. Har'ly, I think!"

"It'd be a pity anything'd happen her. She's a lovely girl to ride!"

"You may say that, Michael! The father gave her the sate, but it was the Lord Almighty gave her the hands!" said old Kearney, devoutly.

"Maybe He'll mind her, so!" responded Michael Donovan, without irreverence.

The shifting of responsibility brought some ease of mind.

"God grant it!" said John Kearney.

Christian was ordinarily possessed of an innate reasonableness that responded to reason, but fear was not in her, and an appeal to reason was least potent with her when she was in the saddle. The veiled hints of danger, by which from, Evans onwards, she had been beset, only woke the spirit of revolt that slept in her but little less lightly than it had slept in her childhood, and were as fuel on the flame the run had kindled.

"Larry," she said, with a light in her eyes, and a flush in her cheeks, "do *you* think I ought to go back?"

"Go back? Why should you?"

Larry, having received a hasty sketch of the position, gave his advice with all the assurance of complete ignorance. "Your father has the sporting rights—anyhow, I don't believe they'll stop you. Irishmen are——"

Dissertation as to what Irishmen were or were not, attractive though it was to a young man who knew nothing of the subject, was checked by the success of Bill Kirby's cast ahead. Half way across the big field, the hounds, who had been industriously spreading themselves, and examining blades of grass and fronds of bracken with the intentness of botanists, came, with a sudden rush, to a deep note from old Bellman, and, as suddenly, broke into full-cry, with the unanimity of an orchestra when the baton comes down. They headed for "Carmody's bounds," and were over that solid barrier, and running hard across the succeeding field, before most of the riders had realised what had happened. The bounds fence was an honest jump—big, but safe. Nancy, at the heels of the bay horse, came up on to it with a perfection that banished all other thoughts from Christian's mind. On the landing side, under the bank, was a strong-running stream, and two or three of the horses, at sight of it, checked on the wide top of the bank, and tried to turn. Not so Nancy. It was enough for her that her father by adoption had not hesitated. She slid her forefeet a little way down the grassy side and went out over the water as if the bank had been a springboard. It was only then, at the gorgeous moment of successful landing, that Christian was aware of a young man running towards the riders, bawling, and demonstrating with something that might be a gun.

"That's one of the Carmodys, Miss," said old Kearney, galloping near her. "Don't mind him! It's as good for you to go on now. That's the house below——"

"Come on, Christian!" shouted Larry; "he'll do no harm!"

The thought crossed Christian's mind that it might be better to disregard these counsels, and to stop and speak to

the assailant, but Nancy had views of her own, and such arguments as a snaffle could offer were quite unavailing. "I might as well go on," thought Christian, "we shall be off his land in a minute."

A very high bank, crowned with furze and thorn bushes, divided them from the next field; there was but one gap in it, near the farm-house, and this was filled with a complicated erection of stones and sods, built high, with light boughs of trees laid upon them; not a nice place, but the only practicable one. Bill Kirby and his whipper-in jumped it; some of the farmers drew back, but Larry's bay horse charged it unhesitatingly, and soared over it with the whole-souled gallantry of a well-bred horse. Nancy, pulling hard, followed him. Christian heard Larry shout, and, looking round, saw him turn in his saddle and strike with his crop at something unseen. At the last instant, as the mare was making her spring, a second man appeared on the farther side of the jump, yelling, and brandishing a wide-bladed hay-knife. To stop was impossible; Christian could only utter a sharp cry of warning, as Nancy, baulked by the suddenness of the attack, but unable to stop herself, went up almost straight into the air, and came down on the boughs, with her hindlegs on one side of them and her forelegs on the other. Then she fell forward on to her knees, and rolled on to her off shoulder, her hind legs still entangled in the boughs. Christian fell with her, and as the mare's shoulder came to the ground, her rider was thrown a little beyond her on the off side. The man, having saved himself by a leap to one side, had instantly taken to his heels.

Christian was on her feet before even Larry, quick as he was in stopping his horse and flinging himself from his back, could reach her.

"Are you hurt?" The question, so fraught with fear, and breathless with remembered disasters, was answered almost before it was uttered.

"Not a scrap! Absolutely all right; but I don't know about Nancy——"

One of the mare's hind feet was wedged in the fork of a bough; she struggled fiercely, and in a second or two she had freed both her hind legs from the tangle of twigs, and lay prone at the foot of the barricade.

"She's all right! He didn't touch her," said Larry, catching her by the bridle. "Come, mare!"

Nancy made an effort, attempting to get on to her feet, and rolled over again on to her side.

"Oh, get the mare up, one of you!" shouted Larry, wild with the rage that had gathered force from the terror by which it had first been strangled. "I want to go after that damned coward——"

He caught his horse's bridle from a man who had climbed over the bank, leaving his own horse on the farther side.

"Why the devil did none of you stop the brute?" he stormed at the little group, now standing on the bank, looking down upon the prostrate mare, while he tried to steady his plunging horse in order to mount.

"It's no good for you, sir!" called John Kearney to him; "he's away back of the house, ye'll never get him!"

"Don't go, Larry," said Christian, who was kneeling by Nancy, caressing her and murmuring endearments. "I'm afraid she's badly hurt."

The mare was lying still. Michael Donovan, who had bred her, slipped his hand under her, and drew it out, red with blood.

"Go after him, if ye like, the bloody ruffian!" he said, furiously, "but the mare will never rise from this! Oh, my lovely little mare!"

"What do you mean?" Larry let his horse go, and flung himself on his knees beside Donovan. Christian, colourless continued to try and soothe Nancy, who lay without moving, though her frightened eye turned from one to another, and her ears twitched.

"Staked she is!" roared Donovan; "that's what I mean! Look at what's coming from her!"

He broke into a torrent of crude statements, made, if possible, more horrible by curses.

Larry struck him on the mouth with his open hand.

"Shut your mouth! Remember the lady!"

Michael Donovan took the blow as a dog might take it, and without more resentment.

Christian quickly put her hand on his shoulder.

"Don't mind, Michael. Let me see what has happened to her——"

Nancy's eye rolled back at Christian, as she stooped over her, leaning on Donovan. Already, a dark pool was forming beside her.

"You couldn't see where the branch bet her, Miss," said Donovan, quieted by Christian's touch, "but there's what done it!" He pointed to the sharp, jagged end of one of the branches, red with blood.

"The Vet——" said Christian, trying to think, speaking steadily. "Couldn't someone fetch Mr. Cassidy?"

"No good, my dear," said old Kearney, wagging his head; "No good at all! There's no medicine for her now but what'll come out of a gun!"

Christian looked up into the faces of the little knot of men round her.

"Is that true?" she said, watching them.

And all the time a voice in her mind said to her that it was true.

"God knows I wouldn't wish it for the best money ever I handled," said one man, and looked aside from her eyes.

Another shook his head, and muttered something about the Will o' God. A third said it was the sharp end of the branch that played hammock with her; he lost a cow once himself the same way. Old Kearney summed up for the group.

"There is no doubt in it, Miss Christian, my dear child——"

Christian leaned hard on Larry's shoulder as she rose to her feet.

"I'm going to get Carmody's gun," she said, beginning to walk away. "He had one. I saw it. I don't suppose he'll mind lending it to me."

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE are illnesses that take possession of their victims slowly and quietly, with an imperceptible start, and a gradual crescendo of envelopment; others there are, that strike, sudden as a hawk, or a bullet. And this is true also of that other illness, the fever of the mind and heart that is called Love. An old song says, and says, for the most part, truly,

"I attempt from Love's sickness to fly in vain."

Larry Coppinger did not attempt to fly, even though he knew as precisely the moment when the fever struck him, as did Peter's wife's mother when her fever left her. Perhaps he might then have tried to escape; he knew it was too late now. That fatal rapturous moment had been when he saw Christian setting forth, a lonely, piteous figure, to fetch Carmody's gun. He had followed her, and his entreaties to her to let him deal with the matter had prevailed. She had turned back, and kneeling down again, kissed the white star on Nancy's forehead, murmuring something to her that Larry could not hear. He had put her saddle on his own horse; when he mounted her, she had stooped down from the tall horse's back, and had whispered: " 'That thou hast to do, do quickly.' " He went over it all in his mind; that was all she had said, and he had not seen her since.

On that afternoon as he moved about the room he had chosen for his studio, and unpacked the monster cases he had brought from Paris, he remembered how, long ago, Mrs. Twomey had laughed at him when he told her he was never going to marry.

"Wait awhile!" mocked Mrs. Twomey, "one day it'll sthrike ye all in the minute—the same as a pairson'd get a stitch when they'd be leaning over a churn!"

Well, it had so struck him, and struck him hard, and he was reeling from the blow.

Her courage, oh God! her courage! How she had ridden that little mad devil of a mare! There wasn't a man out who would have got her over that big country as she had! And then, when that cur had done his dirty work and bolted, was there a whimper or a cry from her? She had faced the music; she had started off to get the gun herself. He knew, just a little, just dimly, he told himself humbly, what the sight of suffering was to her, and she had stood up to it. She, with her passion for animals; she, with her tender, tender heart! Larry, who believed himself to be profoundly introspective, did not know that it was his own flawless physical courage, finding and recognising its fellow in Christian, that had first lit the flame. He thought it was her face, with its delicate charm, its faint, elusive loveliness, that had felled him, laid him low, devastated him. He pleased himself in reiterating his overthrow, in enumerating its causes, while he banged bundles of canvases on to the floor, and pitched clattering sketching-easels and stools into corners, and covered tables and chairs with the myriad colour-boxes, sketch-books, palettes of every shape and variety, brushes, bottles, all the snares that the ingenious *marchand à couleurs* spreads in the sight of the bird, and into which the bird, especially if he be, like Larry, a rich amateur, cheerfully hops. He hardly was aware of what he was doing, his hot thoughts raced in his brain. It seemed to him now to have been years ago that he saw her, in the grey light, riding towards him on Nancy. She had said that he might paint her; that was all that he had thought of then. Much had happened since then; the supreme thing had happened since then! Nothing else really mattered, he thought, sitting down on the edge of a half-empty packing case, and lighting a cigarette, not even the shooting of Nancy. He would give her a dozen Nancys if she wanted them! The first and most important thing in the world was to see her again; and he had to arrange how, and when, and where

he should paint her. Obviously he must at once proceed to Mount Music.

There is a saying among Larry's countrymen: "If a man want a thing he *mus'* have it!" Fortune had, so far, been kind to Larry, and those things that he had wanted sufficiently, he had had. It now remained to be proved if the rule were to have an exception.

"I'm going over to Mount Music just now," he said to Frederica at tea time. "I want to see them all. Will you come, Aunt Freddy?"

Aunt Freddy looked perturbed.

"You haven't seen Cousin Dick yet, have you?"

"No. How could I? He wasn't out. I've seen no one yet but Christian."

His voice lingered on the beloved name, beloved, consciously, since so few hours.

But Aunt Freddy was not apt to perceive fine shades, and she was, moreover, occupied with the framing of a warning.

"You know that Cousin Dick is a good deal changed since you saw him?" she began. "He had a sort of heart attack about a year ago—Dr. Mangan was with him, luckily. They have to try and keep him very quiet, and the worst of it is that so little puts him out."

"Well, I shan't put him out, shall I?" said Larry, confidently, beginning on a third slice of cake, love not having, so far, impaired his appetite.

"He was fearfully put out about your selling to the tenants. He said young Mangan had no right to advise you to sell so low. He told me that even Dr. Mangan was quite against his doing so."

Miss Coppinger regarded her nephew with anxiety. After four years of absence, one never knew exactly how much a young man might not have changed. That little, upturned, golden moustache might not by any means be the whole of it. The ice barrier had been forgotten in the excitement of his return, but even though she understood—and tried not to feel that the fact had its mitigations—that all young

men in France were atheists, that other fact remained, that next Sunday, when she started for Knock Ceoil church, Larry, if he went anywhere, would go to the white chapel on the hill. Aunt Freddy was afraid of no one where she believed herself to be right (and the Spirit of the Nation had long since assured her of this in matters of religion); least of all was she afraid of "a brat of a boy," whom, as she boasted, she had often whipped soundly when he deserved it. But, unfortunately, the brat had her heart in his hands, and her heart was softer than Aunt Freddy knew; and this gave the brat an unfair advantage.

"Then you know, Larry," she continued, her eyes showing what her firm mouth did not admit; "you know, my dear boy, it was rather—well, rather a shock to us to see in the papers your name proposed as the Nationalist candidate here. It upset Dick very much, and, I must say," she added, unflinchingly, "me too!"

Larry put down the third piece of cake, half-finished, and went round the tea-table, and sitting on the arm of Frederica's chair, put his arm round her thin shoulders.

"I'm so sorry!" he said, knowing his power, and using it, "dear Auntie Fred! I ought to have written to you. I forgot all about the beastly thing. But you wouldn't want me to go back of my word? As for the property—well, I thought that was only my own affair. I've come all right out of it; why shouldn't I give the tenants the best terms I could?"

"Cousin Dick says——" began Frederica, standing to her guns.

"And that other show," went on Larry, disregarding what Cousin Dick might have said. "Goodness knows when there'll be an election——"

"That doesn't alter the fact," said Frederica, firmly.

"Yes, I know. Of course I must hold by my own convictions, but let's put off the row until the time comes! One is bound to have rows at elections! I don't want to fight now!"

He pressed a kiss upon her forehead. He was feeling in love and charity with all men. To wheedle Aunt Freddy into forgiveness was the first outlet that presented itself for the excitement that was consuming him.

Larry walked to Mount Music through the Wood of the Ownashee, alone. Miss Coppinger said she disliked the short way across the river by the stepping stones, and preferred to drive the now venerable Tommy round by the road; in her heart, brave as she was, she trusted that Larry would have got through his meeting with Dick before she arrived. Therefore did Larry step along the pebbly path by the river, under the dense canopy of beechen boughs, with, for companions, only the two hound puppies that Bill Kirby did not fail to foist annually upon all amenable friends. These lumbered after Larry's quick foot, with all the engaging absurdity of their kind; tripping over their own enormous feet, chewing outlying portions of one another, as ill-brought-up babies chew their blankets; sitting down abruptly and unpremeditatedly, and watching with deep dubiety the departing form of their escort, as though a sudden and shattering doubt of his identity had paralysed them, until some contrary wind of doctrine blew them into action again, and they hurled themselves upon his trail, filled with the single intention to rush between his legs. Nothing but that instinct of self-preservation that operates independent of the reason, preserved Larry from frequent and violent overthrow. His head was in the clouds; he was abandoning himself to dreams, with the very same headlong enthusiasm that Scandal and Steersman brought to bear upon the problems of existence. He strode past the glade that had been the scene of the Cluhir picnic without so much as a thought of Tishy Mangan. Had you or I reminded him of that brief, yet moving, episode, he would probably have regarded us with wide, bewildered, blue eyes, and asked for details. Then, as memory awakened, he would have laughed delightedly, and said: "Yes! By Jove! So I was! But Georgy cut me out, didn't he?" And he might have added that

there had been scores of them since Tishy, he had forgotten half of them—but this, THIS! Larry would then, inevitably, have lapsed into rhapsody, as would be no more than was decent and right in a young man of artistic temperament, and you or I, our malign intention baffled, would have retired in deserved confusion.

Old Evans was in the hall as Larry walked in through the open door. He received Larry's hand-shake coldly; the four years that had passed since Larry had seen him had withered and greyed him; Larry, something dashed by the reception, remembered the title given him long ago by Christion—"the many-wintered crow,"—and found satisfaction in deciding that the crow was a scald-crow, and a sour old divil at that; anyhow, Evans had always had a knife into him, so it made no difference.

In the drawing-room things went well enough, even though there was an unexplainable chill in the atmosphere. Cousin Isabel was as kind and gentle and vague as ever; Judith was there, very handsome and prosperous, not over-enthusiastic in welcome, rather inclined to patronise a very young man, quite two months younger than a married lady of position and importance. Nevertheless, there was something unregenerate about her eye, that, taken in connection with the two subalterns in whose car she had come to call at Mount Music, suggested that Bill Kirby might at times find life stirring. John, recently ordained, now a very decorative curate in a London church, was there, even more patronising than Judith, and undecided whether to regard Larry with suspicion, as a brand still smouldering from the fires of secularist France, or affectionately, as a member of what, in one of his earlier sermons, he had described as "Our ancient Mother Church, dear Peopul! Beloved, but in some matters, that I will presently indicate to you, mistaken!"

The subalterns were remote, not approving of the style of Larry's tie (which he had bought in Paris, and differed from theirs) and Cousin Dick was not there.

"You must go and see him, dear Larry," says Cousin Isabel, "he's in the study."

"And Christian? Though, of course, I met her this morning——" says Larry.

Christian, poor child, went out for a little walk with the dogs just now. Christian (poor child) had felt that wretched business this morning so terribly. The wretched business was gone into, thoroughly and exhaustively, and yet Larry felt that across one corner of it there was a fold of curtain drawn. He said he would go and see Cousin Dick. There was always a chance that Christian, also, might be in the study. The axiom that "If a man want a thing he *mus'* have it," should, in Larry's case, have the corollary that he must have it at once.

The Major was standing by the chimney piece in the study, warming one foot after the other at the fire that Evans had just replenished. Larry met the scald-crow at the door, and Evans passed him "as if," thought Larry, disgustedly, "he had been seeing me every day for a year! The old beast always hated me!" Larry did not like being hated.

Cousin Dick's greeting was more like old times. Dick was one of those people whose wrath has a tendency to intermit and get cold, even to perish, temporarily, from forgetfulness. On the other hand, in compenastion, perhaps, for this failing, it was a fire easily rekindled. He was still shaking Larry's hand, and looking him up and down, affectionately, and withal, with the inevitable patronage of a long-legged man for one from whom Nature has withheld similar advantages, when Larry discovered the large presence of Dr. Mangan uplifting itself from the chair facing Cousin Dick's, by the fire. (But Christian was not there. He resigned himself.) There was no want of warmth in the Big Doctor's reception. He was quite aware of this himself, and was artist enough to know how useful an asset was the fact that he was genuinely fond of Larry. He had indeed proposed to exhibit his affection in pleasing contrast to the coolness of Larry's Protestant relatives, and that the Major

had forgotten the rôle assigned to him, was a little disappointing. "But wait awhile!" thought the Big Doctor, who, among his other elephantine qualities, possessed that of patience.

The Major seated himself in front of the fire, and Larry pulled up a chair, wondering in his heart what these old boys wanted with a fire this lovely afternoon, and delivered himself to the old boys and to conversation. This, naturally, set with a single movement towards the event of the morning. "A real likely little mare, and shaping well, I'm told," says Dick, "and by the bye, Larry, that's a dev'lish nice horse of yours that Christian came back on. Where did you get him?"

These hunting men were incorrigible, the Doctor thought, seeing the Carmody question in danger of being side-tracked.

"Things have come to a funny way in this country," he observed, "when a fellow will deliberately chance killing a young lady, rather than let her ride over his land—and she having a right to ride over it into the bargain!"

It needed but little to start Major Talbot-Lowry again on the topic that had occupied him unceasingly since Christian's return that morning. Beginning with the burning of the Derrylugga gorse covert, and moving on through threatening letters, and rents deliberately withheld, he lashed himself into one of the quick furies that Larry remembered well. What Larry was less prepared for than was his friend, Dr. Mangan, was the sudden turn that the storm took in his direction.

"The blackguards think they can frighten me into selling on their own terms!" shouted Dick, "and that damned priest of theirs—I beg your pardon, Mangan, but the fellow doesn't behave like a clergyman, and it's impossible to think of him as one—is backing them up, and I may say"—here it was that the heart of the storm was revealed—"I may say that I'm very little obliged to your son, or to his principal here, for the part they have played in the affair! That was the beginning of the whole thing!" He turned fiercely upon

Larry, his tenor voice pitched on a higher key. "How could I, with my property loaded with charges, that were no fault of mine, sell at the price you could afford to take? Look at the price that fellow—what's his damned name?—Brady, got for his farm, for the tenant-right alone, mind you! Forty years' purchase! And I'm offered seventeen for the fee simple!"

Dick was standing up on the hearthrug, towering over the Doctor and Larry in their low chairs. Larry noticed how thin he had become, and how the well-cut grey clothes, that he always wore, hung loosely on his shrunken figure. "You're a young fellow now, Larry; wait till you've been for thirty years doing your best for your property and your country, and getting no thanks! Thanks!" Dick gave a brief and furious laugh. "I've kept the hounds for them. I've slaved on the Bench and on Grand Juries. I've got them roads and railways, and God knows what else—whatever they wanted—I've sat at the Board of Guardians, and done my best to keep down the rates, till they kicked me out to make room for men who would sell their souls for a sixpence, and made their living out of bribes!"

"Oh, come, come, Major, it's not so bad as all that!" said the Big Doctor, soothingly, as Dick stopped, panting for breath. "Don't mind it now!"

"But I *must* mind it!" shouted Dick. "When I think of how I've been treated, and plenty more like me, loyal men who run straight and do their best, I declare to God I feel I don't know which I hate worst, the English Government, that pitches its friends overboard to save its own skin, or my own countrymen, that don't know the meaning of the word gratitude!"

He turned again upon Larry: "And upon my word and honour, Larry, I didn't think that your father's son would have been tarred with that brush, anyhow!"

"Now, Major," broke in Dr. Mangan, again, "you know we agreed that there was no use in attaching too much importance to that transaction. Barty and Larry here were

in a very difficult position, and even though you and I might not have approved entirely of their action——"

"But, Doctor," interrupted Larry, bewildered, and dismayed, "You—I thought you had advised Barty——"

The Big Doctor frowned at him, and winked too, while he laid his huge white hand on his watch-pocket, tapping with his middle finger on the spot which, as he knew, the average layman dedicated to the heart. He trusted to Larry's quickness, and did not trust in vain.

"A sort of heart attack," Aunt Freddy had said.

"I'm most frightfully sorry, Cousin Dick," Larry began, hurriedly, before a worse thing happened. "Somehow, I never thought—you see I was out of the country—it seemed to me that——" he was going to repeat those comforting sedatives about leaving the man at the helm to bark for you—(Heavens! He had been on the point of saying that! Was he going to laugh?)—but he couldn't give Barty away. He rushed into apology, regret, abuse of his own ignorance, and imbecility, and the Big Doctor, at each pause in the penitence, poured a little oil and wine into the wounds for which Larry and the Carmodys were jointly responsible, and Dick's anger, like the red that had flared to his face, fell like a spent flame.

"Say no more, boy, say no more," he said, dropping into the chair from which he had leaped in the course of his *apologia pro vita sua;* "I daresay you knew no better—anyhow, you didn't mean to do me a bad turn——"

Larry took his hand. "You know that, Cousin Dick," he said, in profound distress. "Of all people in the world—the very last. If there was anything I could do now——"

"Well now, I'll tell you what you could do!" cut in Dr. Mangan, jovially, "you could tell our friend Evans to bring in the Major's tumbler of hot milk and whisky, and to look sharp about it too! I ordered he was to have it at six o'clock——"

He looked hard at Larry, who realised that his disturbing presence was to be removed, and forthwith removed it.

He delivered his message, and strayed back to the big, empty hall. A sense of aloofness, of having no place nor part in this well-remembered house, was on him. None of them wanted him; he could see that easily enough, and he had done Cousin Dick a bad turn. He had said so. If it came to that, he supposed he had done Christian a bad turn, too—Christian and Cousin Dick, the only two of the whole crowd who had been really glad to see him. He thought of her face as she came riding through the dusky wood to meet him. "The dawn was in it!" he said to himself; again he saw it, lit with the light that the hunt had kindled; and then he thought of her stricken eyes, as she looked from one man to another, asking for the hope that they had to refuse her. It had been all his fault, or—here the inner apologist, that is always quick to console, interposed—not quite exactly his fault. How was he to have known? A remembrance of Cousin Dick's undeciphered letters came to him; even the inner apologist hung his head. In any case—Larry's active mind resumed its deliberations—it was quite clearly his business to find Christian and to explain to her, as far as was possible, how things stood.

He left the house. A garden-boy had seen Christian "going west the avenue"; Larry collected Scandal and Steersman from the ash-pit, and followed her "west the avenue." He walked slowly, noting how neglected was the general aspect, how badly the avenue was in need of gravel, remembering how in the old days, the bands of slingers had never failed of ammunition, wondering if the Major were really as hard up as he thought he was; wondering if they had all turned against him, and if they would set Christian against him too. He came to the turn near the river that led to the stepping stones, and stood, in deepening depression, waiting, in the hope that she might come. It was seven o'clock, the sun was setting, the sky was warming to its last loveliness of rose and amber, and amethyst, colours with names almost as beautiful as themselves. The long stretches of grass on either side of the avenue were a fierce green, the

brakes of bracken were burning orange, the long shadows of the trees that fell across the roadway were purple. The grove of yew trees, that hid the course of the river from him, had the sharpness of a silhouette cut out of dark velvet.

"Not really black," Larry told himself, screwing up his eyes. He moved on to the grass, and kneeling, framed with his hands as much as seemed good to him. In a moment, in the intoxication of beauty, he had forgotton his troubles; Cousin Dick, singing the swan-song of the Irish landlords; Dr. Mangan, and his bewildering change of front; even Christian, and her views as to his responsibility for the tragedy of the morning, stood aside to make way for the absorbing problems of colour and composition.

The hound puppies strolled on, side by side, heads up, and high-held sterns, steering for nowhere in particular, oblivious as Larry of all save the moment as it passed. A rush of rooks came like a tide across the sky; they flew so low that the drive and rustle of their wings scared the puppies and startled Larry. He stood up and watched the multitudinous host swing westward to his own woods, and just then, a couple of hundred yards ahead, at the turn where the avenue plunged into the velvet gloom of the yew-trees, he saw Christian coming towards him, alone, save for a retinue of dogs.

If that old saying (already quoted with reference to Dick Talbot-Lowry) be true, when it asserts that "wise men live in the present, for its bounty suffices them," then was Larry Coppinger, like his cousin, indeed a wise man. Remorse, anxiety, the wonder of the sunset, were swept from his mind, and Christian filled it like a flood. She looked very tired, and he told her so, eyeing her so closely that she turned her face from him.

"I won't be stared at and scolded! Why shouldn't I be tired if I like?"

"If it were only tiredness——" said Larry, with more tenderness in his voice than he knew. "Christian, they've been telling me that it was my fault—the rows with the

tenants, and that devil coming at you this morning—and—and everything!"

He could not speak directly of Nancy's death; he knew what Christian felt for her horses and dogs. "I've been looking for you everywhere. I wanted to try and tell you what I felt—but since I've seen your father and old Mangan, I feel too abject to dare to say I'm sorry——"

"Why should they think it was your fault? It was my own fault. I ought to have gone back when Kearney warned me——"

"They meant the whole show. Beginning with Barty's selling to my tenants, and then your father's people making trouble, and the Carmodys burning the covert, and all the rest of it! They're quite right! It's all my rotten fault! Christian, I'm going back to France! I can't face you after what I've brought on you!"

In the bad moments of life, when the bare and shivering soul stands defenceless, waiting for evil tidings, or nerving itself to endure condolence, Christian had ever a gentle touch; and she knew too, when it comforted wrong-doers to be laughed at.

"Oh, Larry! And you pretended you wanted to paint my picture!" she said, looking at his miserable face with eyes that shone as the Pool of Siloam might have shone after the Angel had troubled it; there were tears in them, but there was healing, too.

Larry took her hand and held it tight.

"You don't mean it—how could you bear to look at me?"

"But I shan't look at you! You will have to look at me—that is, if you can bear it! You must try and brace yourself to the effort!"

This, it may be admitted, was provocation on Christian's part, but, as she told herself afterwards, desperate measures were necessary, or they would both have burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXV

THE resolution to return to France, announced, as has been set forth, by Mr. St. Lawrence Coppinger, was not adhered to. In the first place, there was Barty Mangan and the various affairs that he represented; in the second place, there was the portrait; in the third place—which might as well, if not better, have come first—the resolve had expired, like the flame of a damp match, in the effort that gave it birth.

Aunt Freddy welcomed the suggestion of the portrait with enthusiasm. She had had four years of peace, "careing" Coppinger's Court for the reigning Coppinger; to "care" the reigning Coppinger himself, was, she felt, a far less peaceful undertaking. She agreed entirely with the well-worn adage relative to idle hands, and had no illusions as to her own capacity to offer alternative attractions.

"I felt," she remarked to Lady Isabel, "exactly as if someone had deposited a half-broken young horse in the drawing-room, and had told me to exercise it! My dear, Christian's portrait is a Godsend! But I may tell you, in strict confidence, that, so far, it's far too clever for an ignoramus like me to make head or tail of it!"

"It certainly fills their mornings very thoroughly," responded Lady Isabel, rather dubiously; "Christian vanishes from breakfast time till lunch. I suppose *you* see more of them?"

Aunt Freddy's reply was less distinct and definite than was usual with her. Oh, well—occasionally—yes, generally—at least, always sometimes—he was painting her in the garden, on that seat by the yew hedge—so sheltered and sunny, and the weather was so perfect; she was working in the garden herself every morning. Thus did the righteous

Frederica wriggle and prevaricate, causing Lady Isabel to assume that the full rigours of chaperonage were complied with, while to herself, Aunt Freddy thought that it would be perfectly ideal. But what "it" was, she did not particularise to anyone.

Mr. St. Lawrence Coppinger was not a great artist, but it had been conceded to him, even in the studio, that he had pretty colour (which was quite without reference to his own complexion) and a knack of catching a likeness. Added to these gifts he possessed a third, in being able to talk without hindering the activities of his brush. They talked a great deal to each other during those long, delightful mornings in the sunny corner by the yew-hedge; idle, intimate talk, that wandered back to the days of the Companions of Finn, and on, through stirring tales of the *Quartier Latin* into the future, and what it was to hold for them. Larry knew what his future must hold if it was to satisfy him. Since the moment when "Love's sickness" had laid hold of him (the same as a person would get a stitch leaning over a churn) he had known it. While he painted her, staring deep and hard, appraising, carefully, with his outer soul, the curve of her cheek, the delicate drawing of her small ear, the tender droop of her dark eyelashes, all the subtle values of light and shade, all the problem of inherent colour, and the colour that was lent by the sky and the green things round her, his inner soul was repeating the old saying: "I love my eyes for looking at you!"

Sometimes he thought he would stand it no longer, he would throw down his palette and his brushes, and let the portrait go to blazes, and kneel at her feet, telling her, over and over again, that he loved her, until she would have to believe him. Yet, for there is something inhuman about the artist, he refrained. The portrait was going so well—the best head he had ever done—out of sight better than anything he had done at the studio (what wouldn't he give to have a lesson on it from old Chose!). He wouldn't break the spell of successful work until he could carry the picture

no farther. Then, he thought to himself, oh then, he would be strong to speak!

And, did he but know it, there was no need to speak; not any need at all. For Christian knew. Not enough has been said about her if it has not been made clear that, for her spirit, the barriers and coverings that other spirits take to themselves wherewith to build hiding-places and shelters were of little avail. Motives and tendencies, the hidden forces that underlie action, were perceptible to her as are to the water-diviner the secret waters that bend and twist his hazel rod. Well she knew that Larry loved her; he was not the first in whom she had divined it, but he was the first whose heart, crying to her, voicelessly, had wakened the answering chime in hers; the first, she said to herself, and the last. She wondered, sometimes, if he knew; it seemed incredible that he could be with her, watching her, studying her least look, and not know. Yet, she loved him for not knowing, for his boyishness, his babyishness, his simplicity. She wondered if she were a fairy-woman, who by her arts had beguiled a mortal. She had met an extraordinary woman once, in London, where anyone, however extraordinary, is possible, and this being, so she told Larry, had gazed at her, raptly, had then assured her that she saw her aura (blue shot with gold) and had told her that she had a very aged soul.

"I felt as if I were an old boot!" said Christian.

"Old idiot herself!" Larry said hotly; "what else did she pretend to know about you?"

"She said she had met me before, in a previous incarnation. She couldn't believe that I didn't remember her. But I couldn't."

"I'm glad you couldn't," said Larry, still angry. "I won't have you remembering lives that I wasn't in! Anyhow, I don't believe they were half as good as this one. I call this a thundering good life. *I* don't want to have been Julius Cæsar or Queen Anne."

"Oh, I daresay you weren't," said Christian, consolingly;

"you don't remind me of either of them. What would be more to the point would be to know what you were going to be. In this life, I mean."

"Oh, a painter first," said Larry, responding with alacrity, as do most people, to the stimulus of discussing himself; "but not exclusively. I shouldn't mind having the hounds for a bit, and I should like to travel—the gorgeous East, you know—that sort of thing. And I must say," he hesitated, "I'm rather keen to have a shot at politics."

He put down his palette and brushes and began to roll a cigarette, while he walked backwards away from his easel, staring alternately at his canvas and his model.

"Have you forgotten that I'm the prospective candidate for this constituency? The Home Rule ticket, you know!" He looked at his audience with a touch of defiance; "I don't know what *you* may think—*my* notion is——"

The prospective candidate launched forth into a statement of his notions; what, precisely, they were, is a matter that may here be omitted. The kaleidoscope of Irish politics has made many new patterns since Larry outlined his views for Christian, and the pattern of 1907 interests us no more. The affinity that exists between politics and eggs is not limited to the function of the latter in emphasising criticism of the former; it also extends to individual characteristics. The morning newspaper and the morning egg should be equally recent. Larry's political notions, when he stated them, had at least the merit of freshness, and it shall be left to them.

Christian, listening to his ambitions, felt herself older than ever.

"I think I should be a painter all the time, and let Bill keep the hounds for me," she said, indulgently, "and I certainly should *not* play with politics—I'm certain you'd hate them."

"Well, but I'm pledged, you know! I'm absolutely in honour bound to play up if I'm wanted——"

"Whether you know the game or no?" said Christian,

mockingly. "Very sporting! I'm *not* a Home Ruler, as it happens. I've no breadth of outlook! *I* haven' been in France for four years!"

"You're a reactionary!" declared Larry; "I tell you Self-Government is in the air!"

With all her suppleness of mind, Christian had in her something of the inbred obstinacy of fidelity that often goes with long descent. Her colour rose.

"*We* have always stood for the King!" she said, holding up her head, and looking past Larry to the high, sailing clouds.

Larry began to laugh.

"Christian! It's awfully becoming to you to talk politics! Keep quite quiet and I'll make a study of you as Britannia —or Joan of Arc——"

It was characteristic of these young people, that in the heat of political argument they joined battle as freely as if no other point of contact existed for them. This it is to be born and bred in Ireland, where people live their opinions, and everyone is a patriot with a different point of view, and politics are a hereditary disease, blatant as a port-wine mark, and persistent as a family nose.

Miss Frederica, with a guilty remembrance of Lady Isabel's enquiries, had established her weeding apparatus at a bed near the yew-hedge. She heard the voices raised in discussion, and, catching words here and there, felt that if these were the topics that occupied her charges, Isabel need not have inflicted upon her the abominable nuisance of poking in her nose where it was not wanted. Thus did Miss Coppinger summarise the duties of a chaperon; but it must be remembered that she had never been broken to the work, and in any case she had been out of harness for four years.

The luncheon gong sounded to her across the Michaelmas daisies, and the tall scarlet lobelias, and the gorgeous dahlias of the September garden; she gathered her tools together and projected a shriek in the direction of the yew hedge.

"Children! Lunch!"

As, dizzy with stooping, she slowly reared herself to her full height, she saw a black, moving blur on the drive beyond the garden. She rubbed her eyes; the blur defined itself as a man in priestly black. Not Mr. Fetherston, as she had first believed, but Father Sweeny.

"A wolf in sheep's clothing!" thought Frederica, using, as was her wont, the well-worn phrase with guileless zest. She held that although it might not, primarily, have been intended to describe the Roman Catholic Priesthood, its application in a later age was obvious.

With a cautious eye on the wolf, she approached the yew hedge.

"Larry! Father Sweeny's at the hall door. You must ask him in to lunch!"

To herself she thought: "He's Larry's affair, thank goodness! And I'll see that my young man does his duty!"

When Frederica spoke of, or to, her nephew, as "my young man," it was generally in connection with what she felt to be his duty, and felt also that it was her duty to see that his was not shirked.

Father Tim Sweeny, at lunch, at the house of his chief parishioner, was a very different being from the damaged and ferocious bull in hospital. Conscious of his priestly dignity and of the need of supporting it, but shaken by the minor stresses of the situation, the senseless multiplicity of forks and spoons, the bewildering restrictions by which he felt himself to be webbed about, hampered, mastered, Father Tim was as a wild bull in a net, and was even pathetic in his unavailing efforts to prove himself equal to his surroundings. He cleared his throat at intervals, with an authority that seemed to prelude something more epoch-making than an assent to one of Frederica's industrious platitudes; he snuffled and fidgeted, eating scarcely at all, and repelling the reverential assiduities of the servants with shattering abruptness.

"Christian saved the situation," Frederica said, in subsequent conversation with the Reverend Charles Fetherston;

"she absolutely 'charmed him to a smile.' She said afterwards that the smile made her think of a Druidic stone circle, slightly imperfect from age! She always thinks of absurd things; but I was grateful to her! She has an amazing gift for setting people at their ease."

"I'm not sure that our respected friend might not be more tolerable when he was *not* at his ease!" said the Reverend Charles.

"Larry simply sulked," continued Miss Coppinger; "I'm afraid Paris life does not inculcate much respect for religion."

"Very possibly!" said the Reverend Charles, non-committally. "I feel for poor Sweeny! He knows now what Purgatory is like!"

"I assure you I was as civil as I knew how to be," asserted Frederica.

"I'm sure you were!" said the Reverend Charles, stuffing a pipe as he spoke, and sniggering into the bowl.

Miss Coppinger was justified in believing that Christian had been a success with Father Sweeny.

"I declare I could like that gerr'l, Christian Lowry," he said to Father Greer. "She's a good gerr'l enough. Decent! Civil!" Each adjective of approval was launched on a snort that indicated some co-existing irritation; "but I have me own opinion of young Coppinger!"

"A good one?" simpered Father Greer.

"The reverrse!" said Father Tim, and a least four r's rang and rolled in the word.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE portrait of that civil and decent girl, Christian Talbot-Lowry, was finished; it had been conveyed to Mount Music, and was there established on an easel in the billiard-room. The artist and the model, having raised and lowered blinds, and arranged curtains to their liking, or as nearly to that unattainable ideal as circumstances permitted, were now recovering from the criticism of their relations on the completed work.

The artist who works in the bosom of his own family has much to bear, and, so the family consider, much to learn. Neither in endurance, nor in the docile assimilation of instruction, had Mr. Coppinger been conspicuously successful, and his model, on whom had rested the weighty responsibility of keeping the peace, or, at least, of averting open warfare between the painter and the critics, was now, albeit much spent by her efforts, engaged in binding up the wounds inflicted on the former by the latter.

"If you hadn't argued with them, they would have liked it very much; you took them the *absolutely* wrong way! But they *really* are deeply impressed by it."

"I don't care what they think; I know jolly well it's the best thing I've ever done!" said Larry, whose temperature was still considerably above normal. "Your mother is the only one of the lot with a soul to be saved. *She* didn't harangue about what she doesn't understand! *She* said: 'It makes me think of when she was a little child, and used to say she saw things, and the other children used to tease her so dreadfully'!"

"Quite true," said Christian. "So they did! And now they're going for you! But you never teased me, Larry."

"Thank God, I didn't!" said Larry; he had been glowering at his picture, but as he spoke he wheeled round, and sat down beside Christian on the long billiard-room sofa. "Christian, you know——" he began, stammering, and hesitating in a way that was unlike himself.

Christian interrupted him quickly.

"What shall you call the picture? I met Barty Mangan the other day, and he was asking me all sorts of questions about it."

"I shall call it 'Christian, dost thou hear them?'" said Larry, telling himself that the moment had come. "I was feeling that about you all the time—I mean when I was painting. Christian, you *did* hear them, didn't you? What were they saying? Did they say anything about me?"

He caught her hand and leaned to her, compelling her eyes to meet his; "Let her see into my heart!" he thought; "she will find only herself there!"

And just then the door opened, and old Evans appeared.

Larry released Christian's hand, and went red with rage up to the roots of his fair hair. What he thought of Evans' incursion was written so plainly on his face, that Christian, in that impregnable corner of her mind where dwelt her sense of humour, felt a bubble of laughter rise.

"You asked Mrs. Dixon, Miss, to see the picture," said Evans, with a sour look at Larry. "She's outside now."

"Come in, Dixie," called Christian, with a sensation of reprieve. Suspense had been trembling in the air round her; it trembled still, but Dixie would bring respite, if not calm.

Mrs. Dixon, ceremonially clad in black silk, sailed up the long billiard room, majestic as a full-rigged ship. Time had treated her well; the increase of weight that the years had brought had done little more than help to keep the wrinkles smoothed; her love for Christian, having survived the depredations of the larder that had once tried it, had triumphed over the enforced economies that marked Christian's rule as housekeeper, and was now her consolation for them. To

apprehend the intention of a painting is not given to all, and is a matter that requires more experience than is generally supposed. To find a landscape has been reversed by the hand that wields the duster, so that the trees stand on their heads, and the sky is as the waters that are beneath the firmament, is an experience that has been denied to few painters, and Mrs. Dixon would have found many to sympathise with her, as she stood in silent stupefaction before the portrait. Larry had been justified in his belief in it, but for such as Mrs. Dixon, its appeal was inappreciable. Christian's face was in shade, the brown darkness of her loosened hair framed it, and blended with the green darkness of the yew hedge. Faint reflected lights from her white dress, touches of sunlight that came through the leaves of the surrounding trees gave the shadowed face life. In the clear stillness of the eyes, something had been caught of the wonder that was latent in Christian's look, the absorption in things far away, seen inwardly, that in childhood had set her in a place apart; rarer now, but still there for those to see who could give confidence to her shy spirit to forget the limitations of this world, and to stray forth to meet invisible comrades from other spheres. Sometimes it has been given to an artist to rise, not by his conscious volition, above his wonted power; to portray one beloved face with the force of his emotion rather than that of his capacity, transcending the limits of his ordinary skill, just as a horse will put forth his last ounce of effort in response to the magnetism of one rider, and may never again touch the same level of achievement.

But although the very fact that in this canvas something had lifted Larry's art to greatness, made it for Mrs. Dixon a mystery and a bewilderment, she had no intention of admitting defeat. After a moment or two of silence, she cast up her eyes in an appeal to what seemed to be a familiar near the ceiling, and said in impassioned tones:

"Well, well, isn't that lovely?"

The familiar apparently confirmed the opinion, for she

repeated, with a long sigh: "Wonderful altogether! I could be looking at it all day!" She turned to Christian with profound deference. "And what might it be intended to represent, Miss?"

Larry, who had picked up a cue, and was knocking the balls about, gave a short and nettled laugh.

"Oh, Dixie!" said Christian, suffering equally with artist and critic, "don't you see, it's a picture of me!"

Mrs. Dixon took the blow gallantly.

"Well, wasn't I the finished fool to forget my specs! I that couldn't see the harp on a ha'penny without them!"

"Don't worry, Dixie," said Larry, smacking a ball into a pocket; "I'm not surprised you didn't recognise it—it's not half good enough."

"Master Larry, my dear," returned Mrs. Dixon, whose social perceptions were more acute than her artistic ones, "I'll go bail there isn't one could take Miss Christian's picture the way you could, you that was always her companion!" She moved away from the easel, and murmuring; "and, please God, always will be!" she rustled away down the long room. Mrs. Dixon, indomitable Protestant though she was, did not share Evans' opinion of Larry.

Larry threw down the cue and opened the high French window into the garden at the back of the house.

"Christian, for heaven's sake come out! I can't stand this stinking room any longer! I feel as if all the imbecilities that I've had to endure this afternoon were hanging in a cloud over the billiard tale. Come up to the old stone on the hill, and have some fresh air."

He stepped out into the garden, and Christian followed him, smiling within herself at his impatience, the absurd impatience that she loved because it was his. It wouldn't be Larry if he suffered fools, or anything else that he disliked, gladly or peaceably. The feeling that she was immeasurably older than he was was always at its most convincing when his painting was in question; even she could

not quite realise what it meant to him to have rude hands laid upon the child of his soul.

The garden was dank and heavy with overgrown, dying things, as ill-cared-for gardens are wont to be at the end of September, but the tall bush of sweet-scented verbena, that grew by the door in the south wall, was still as green and sweet as in high summer. Christian broke off some sprays and drew them through her hands before she put one into the front of her shirt.

"Here, Larry," she said, giving him one, "this will help you to forget the billiard room!"

Larry gave her a long look as he took it; "I don't altogether want to forget it," he said. "I daresay good old Dixie was a useful discipline."

Had Christian heard Mrs. Dixon's final aspiration she would have realised that with it Dixie had covered her failure as an art critic.

Outside the garden was a wide belt of fir trees, and beyond and above the trees, stretched the great hill, Cnochán an Ceoil Sidhe, the Hill of Fairy Music, that gave its name to the house and demesne. Christian and Larry passed through the shadowy grove, walking side by side along the narrow track, their footsteps made noiseless by its thick covering of pine needles. It was dark in the wood; the fir trees towered in gloom above them; here and there in the deep of the branches there was the stir of a wing, as a pigeon settled to its nest; from beyond the wood came a brief, shrill bicker of starlings; all things beside these were mute, and in the silent dusk, spirit was sensitive to spirit, and the air was tense with the unspoken word.

The sun was low in the west when they came out on to the open hillside, and went on up the path, through the heather, that led to the Druid stone beside the Tober an Sidhe, the fairies' well. The mist, golden and green, that comes with an autumn sunset, half hid, half transfigured the wide distances of the valley of the Broadwater; the darkness of the woods, blended from this aspect into one, of

Mount Music and Coppinger's Court, was softened by its veils; the far hills were transparent, as if the light had fused them to clearest brown, and topaz, and opal glass. The hill side, above and beneath them, glowed and smouldered with the ruby-purple of heather.

Christian and Larry stood in the path beside the ancient stone and looked out over the valley; the vastness and the glory of the great prospect whelmed them like a flood, the sense of imminence that was over them strung their nerves to vibrating and held them silent.

"My God!" sighed Larry, at last, trembling, turning to her who had never failed to understand him, "Christian! it's too beautiful—the world is too big—I can't bear it alone——" He caught her arm. "You've got to help me. Oh Christian!——"

Christian turned her face from him.

"I believe I could," she said in a very low voice.

Even as she spoke, the truth broke out of her soul and ran through her, running from her soul to his, like the flame of oil spilled upon clear water. A voice cried a warning in her heart. "Too late!" she answered it with triumph.

"Darling!" said Larry, holding her close.

* * * * * *

The sunset

"bloomed and withered on the hill
Like any hill-flower";

but long those two stood by the Druid stone, knowing, perhaps, the best moment that life could give them, facing the dying radiance with hearts that were full of sunrise.

CHAPTER XXVII

Doctor Francis Mangan, driving his car at something even more than his usual high rate of speed, to the Parochial House, a mile or so from the town of Cluhir, what time the sun's last rays were falling upon the Druid stone on Cnochán an Ceoil Sidhe, would have been far from pleased had he seen what the sun then saw. On their knees by the Tober an Sidhe, Larry and Christian were looking into the tiny cave in which the fairy water rose, and were giving each to each their plighting word, the old word that they had known since they were children:

"While water stands in Tubber an shee,
My heart in your hands, your heart in me,"

and, observing scrupulously the prescribed rite, were drinking a mouthful of the water, each from the other's hand.

Dr. Mangan would probably have said that it was all children's nonsense, and that it was easier to break a promise than to keep it, but it may be asserted with tolerable certainty that he would not have been pleased.

He was a strong and able driver, and his big car whirled up Father Greer's neat and narrow drive, holding undeviatingly the crown of the high-cambered track, and stopped dead at the front door of the Parochial House.

That Spirit of the Nation to whom allusion has occasionally been made in these pages, was by now well accustomed to the discouragement that she had ever received from the two young lovers whose betrothal she had been powerless to forbid. She had fled from the benign fairy influences

of the Tober an Sidhe; but now, full of hope, she was hovering with wide-spread wings over the Parochial House, and, as its door was opened by Father Greer's elderly and ugly housekeeper, the Spirit folded her wings and slipped past her, as by a familiar path, into the priest's sitting-room.

Father Greer was "inside," the elderly and ugly housekeeper said; "would the Doctor sit in the parlour a minute and he'd come down?"

The Doctor "sat" as requested, in the parlour, noting, as he had often noted before, its arid asceticism, wondering how any man could stand the life of a priest, respecting the power that could enable a man to dispense with all the things that, in his opinion—which, by the way, he pronounced "oping-en"—made life worth living.

Father Greer came imperceptibly into the room while the Doctor was still pondering upon the hardness of the black horsehair-covered armchair in which he was seated.

"Why, Doctor, this is an unexpected pleasure! I heard you were away," the priest said, laying a limp hand in the Doctor's big fist.

"So I was too. I was summoned to a consultation. That's what I'm come to you about, Father. It's old Prendergast. I'm thinking he won't last much longer."

"D'ye mean Daniel? The Member?"

"I do."

Father Greer took his thin nose, with the nostrils edged with red, between his finger and thumb, and pinched it slowly downwards several times.

"Well, what then?" he said at length.

"That's the point," said the Big Doctor, looking at the priest's pale and bumpy forehead, and trying in vain to catch his eye. "You know that young Coppinger's name was sent up by our local Committee four years ago, and the Party approved it."

"I wonder were they in the right!" said Father Greer, still pinching his nose, and looking up at the Doctor over his knuckles.

"I don't see who we could find that'd do better," said Dr. Mangan, apologetically. "He's well off, and he holds strong Nationalist oping-ens; and then, of course, he's a Catholic."

"I'm told he didn't go to Mass since he came home"; Father Greer let the statement fall without expression.

"Ah well, he's only just back from France. Give him a little time, and he'll come to himself," said the Doctor, still apologetic.

"I understand he's been painting Miss Christian Talbot-Lowry's portrait," pursued Father Greer, with limpid simplicity. "I'm told she's as pretty a young girl as there is in this neighbourhood."

Whether this slight prod of the mahout's *ankus* was, or was not, intentional, it is not easy to say, but it took instant effect upon the Big Doctor.

"There are other pretty young girls in the neighbourhood besides Christian Lowry," he said sharply. "And maybe prettier! I don't think it would give us much trouble to find one that Larry Coppinger would be well satisfied with, and one that's in the bosom of the Church, too!"

"I greatly deplore mixed marriages," said Father Greer; permitting his eyes to meet those of Dr. Mangan. "I had hoped that in the case of this young man beneficial influences might have been brought to bear——"

"If you want to put a spoke in that wheel," interrupted the Doctor with eagerness, "you'll support his nomination. I'll undertake to say there won't be much talk of mixed marriages then!"

Father Greer's small eyes again rested for a second on the Doctor's broad face, with its strong, overhanging brows and heavy under-jaw, and drew his own conclusions from the confident smile that showed the white teeth under the drooping, black moustache that had still scarcely a grey hair in it.

"I was thinking that might be what he was after!" thought Father Greer. "Well, he's a good warrant to play his hand

well, and more unsuitable things have occurred before now. Yet, didn't I hear something——!" Even in thought Father Greer observed a studied mildness and moderation, and there were contingencies which might remain unformulated until they crystallised into certainty.

"I'll think it over, Doctor," he said. "I'm inclined to your view of the case, and I might be disposed to advocate the candidature of your nominee. But,"—here Father Greer sniffed several times, indicating that a humorous aspect of the case had occurred to him, "what will we do if he turns 'sour-face,' as they say, on us?"

This euphuism, which had been adopted by some of the more extreme of the Nationalist party to indicate members of the opposing communion, was received by Dr. Mangan as an apt and entertaining quotation on the part of his clergyman.

"No fear, no fear!" he said, laughing jovially, "but if you'll allow me to say so, I think a good deal depends on this business going through."

The Spirit of the Nation smiled also; it was evident to her that these ministers of hers were conscientiously intent on doing her pleasure, and, leaving them with confidence, she spread her wide wings and followed the broad stream of the river down the valley in the direction of Mount Music.

Dr. Mangan drove home as swiftly and capably as was his wont. It had been fair-day in Cluhir, and the people from the country were slowly and reluctantly forsaking the enjoyments of the town. Large women piled voluminously on small carts, each with a conducting little boy and a labouring little donkey somewhere beneath her; men in decent blue cloth garments, whose innate respectability must have suffered acutely from the erratic conduct of the limbs inside them; wandering knots of cattle, remotely attended by the wearers of blue cloth aforesaid; horses carting themselves and their owners home, with entire self-control and good sense; and, anchored in the tide of traffic, the ubiquitous beggar-women, their filthy hands proffering matches, green

apples, bootlaces, their strident tongues mastering the noises of the street, their rapacious, humorous eyes observant of all things. All these did Dr. Mangan encounter and circumvent, frustrating their apparent determination to commit suicide by those diverse methods of abuse, cajolery, and, on the part of the car, mechanical activity, that formed an important part of the necessary equipment of an Irish motorist of the earlier time. Nevertheless, the more intimate portion of his brain was deeply engaged in those labyrinths of minor provincial intrigue in which so many able intellects spend themselves, for want of wider opportunity.

Mrs. Mangan was in the kitchen, where, indeed, she was not infrequently to be found, when the Doctor came in by the back-door from the yard.

"I want you, Annie," he said, shouldering his enormous bulk along the narrow passage, and treading heavily on the cat, who, her mystic meditations thus painfully interrupted, vanished in darkness, uttering the baleful cry of her kind, that is so inherently opposed to the blended forgiveness and apology that give poignancy to a dog's reproach for a similar injury.

"Look here, Annie. Before I forget it, I want you to take the car on Saturday—I'll want it myself to-morrow—and call upon Miss Coppinger. Barty can drive you. I got a wire awhile ago, and I have to go on the nine o'clock to-night to Broadhaven. It's that unfortunate Prendergast the Member. There's nothing can be done for the poor fellow, but whether or no, I must go."

"They'll not be satisfied till they have you dead, too, dragging at you!" protested Mrs. Mangan. "What nonsense they have, and you there only this morning! On earth, what can you do more for him?"

"They think more of me, my dear, than you do!" said the Doctor, cheerfully. "Be listening, now, to what I'm saying. You're to be as civil as be damned to old Frederica, and tell Barty he's to fix up with Larry to come here—what

day is this to-day is? Thursday?—Tell him I'll be in on Sunday afternoon, and I want to talk to him on very special business. Now, will you remember that?"

He repeated his commands, as people will who have learnt, as most Doctors must learn, the fallibility of the human memory and its infinite powers of invention and substitution.

Mrs. Mangan listened obediently and promised attention. Although in matters to which she attached slight importance, such as the proportions of a prescription, her memory was liable to betray her, in other affairs, it had the cast-iron accuracy of the peasant, and without having been privileged with the Doctor's full confidence, she was probably deeper in it than he was aware.

While still these intentions with regard to young Mr. St. Lawrence Coppinger were whirling in the air above him, as a lasso swirls and circles before it secures its victim, that young man was, it is no exaggeration to say, staggering home under the weight of his happiness. After the sacrament at the Tober an Sidhe he and Christian had gone from the hill, hand in hand, like two children. In silence they had gone through the dark wood, and almost in silence had made their mutual farewells in the fragrant shadow of the pines.

When the soul is tuned to its highest it cannot find an interpreter. The lips can utter only broken sounds, pathetically inadequate to express emotions that may, in some future sphere, make themselves known in terms other than are permitted to us. There is an inner radiance that is beyond thought, that might conceivably utter itself in music or in colour, but that can no more be translated into words than can the radiance of the mid-day sun be more than indicated by earthly painters with earthly pigments.

So it was with Larry and Christian. It chances now and then on this old, and prosaic, and often tearful earth that some kindly spirit leaves the door of Paradise a little open, and two happy people—though sometimes it is only one—are caught inside for a time, and come out, as Larry did,

bewildered, dazzled, wandering back to earth, he scarcely knew how, saying, drunkenly, to himself:

"Good Lord! She is so bright to-night!"

as the blackbird said, who was "blowing his bugle to one far bright star."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Old, prosaic, and often tearful, though this earth may be, few are anxious to hasten their departure from it, and Daniel Prendergast, Esq., M.P., abetted by the ministrations of that able consultant, Dr. Mangan, "hung on," as his friends put it, with unexpected tenacity to his share of the world. And, so far reaching are the etheric cords that are said to bind us all together, Mr. Prendergast's grip of his sorry and suffering life bestowed upon Larry and Christian three days to be spent within the confines of Paradise.

This may seem an over-statement when it is recorded that their next meeting was at 7 a.m. at a cubbing meet of the hounds, which occurred on the morning following on Larry's discovery that the *entrée* to Paradise had been his for the asking; it is, however, no more than the truth. Christian had exacted a promise from him that no word was to be said to any other of the high contracting parties until Monday, and, as they rode in at the Castle Ire gates, the matter was still under debate.

"Three days we must have, just three, with this secret hidden between us like a pearl in an oyster-shell! Larry, you know *I* can keep a secret!"

"And you think I can't!" said Larry, affronted.

"I don't think, I know it! But you must try! Don't forget I've got to week-end at the——" she named people who lived in the next county. "No one shall be told until I come home!"

This was when they were riding to the meet. Larry had brought over Joker, the bay horse, for her and he was himself riding a small grey four-year-old mare, on whose education

as a hunter he was entering. It was one of those gorgeous mornings of late September, when everything is intense in colour and in sentiment. A light white frost was melting, in the first rays of the sun, to a silver dew, that twinkled on grass and bush and twig. Now and then a beech leaf, prematurely gold, came spinning down in the still air; from high places of heaven a tiny gabble of music, cold, and shrill, and sweet, told of the songs of the larks at those heavenly gates within which Larry's and Christian's spirits were dwelling.

"Yes!" Christian repeated, as they rode tranquilly along on the grass beside one of the long Castle Ire avenues, "it shall remain a secret as long as possible, unprofaned by the vulgar! It's like this morning; the dew's on it still. Larry, you've got to try!"

"Got to try, have I?" said Larry, beaming at her fatuously.

The horses were sidling close to one another after the manner of stable companions; Larry put his hand on the bay horse's withers and gazed into Christian's laughing eyes, while the blue of the southern Irish sky uttered its strong, splendid note of colour behind the pale rose of her face, and the ineffable freshness of the morning thrilled in him.

"If you look at me like that in general society," he declared, "I shall either give it away on the spot—or burst! Look here, here's the measured-mile gallop; I'll race you to the hall door! If I get in first, I shall tell everyone we're engaged!"

"Done!" said Christian, instantly shortening her reins; "but I back Joker!"

She touched Joker with her heel and the big horse sprang, at the hint, into a gallop. Quickly as he started, Rayleen, the grey mare (whose name, being interpreted, is Little Star), being ever concentrated for instant effort, as is the manner of small and well-bred four-year-olds, was up to his shoulder in a couple of bounds, even in the flame of her youth and enthusiasm, she drove ahead of Joker's ordered

strides, and led him for awhile. Larry's laugh of triumph, that the wind tossed back to her, was not needed to rouse Christian to emulation. Any hint of a race, any touch of a contest, appealed to her as instantly as to Rayleen, and she was racing for that secret that was like a pearl. Sitting very still she touched Joker again with her heel and spoke to him. There was in her the magnetism that can fire a horse to his best, by some mystery, compound of sympathy and stimulation, that has no outward manifestation. Joker's great shoulders worked under her as he lengthened and quickened his beautiful, rhythmic stride. The wind of the pace whistled in her ears and snatched at her hair. She crammed her hat over her forehead, laughing with the joy of battle. She was level with Larry now. Now she was passing him, and the little grey strove in vain to hold her place. Gallant as she was, what could she do aaginst a raking, trained galloper, well over sixteen hands, and nearly thoroughbred?

The smooth mile of shining grass was annihilated, wiped out in a few whirling minutes. Joker had but just fairly settled down to go when the end of the race was at hand. Had he been a shade less of a gentleman than he was, Christian, and the snaffle in which she was riding him, would hardly have stopped him, as did their joint efforts, on the gravel in front of the goal that Larry had given her.

Hunts come, and hunts go, and are forgotten. Horses, the best and dearest of them, fade, in some degree, from remembrance; where are the snows of yester year, and where the great gallops that we rode when we were young? But here and there something defies the mists of memory, and remains, bright and imperishable as a diamond. I believe that for Christian that mile of sun and wind and speed and flight, with her lover thundering at her heels, will remain ever vivid, one of the moments that are of the incalculable bounty of Chance; moments that earth can never equal, nor Heaven better.

The hounds and staff were waiting at the farther end of

the long front of Castle Ire, when Larry and Christian made their somewhat sensational entrance upon the scene.

"Joker wins, by a length and a half," said Bill Kirby, judicially, "and a very pretty race. I never saw a prettier, on any sands, on any jackasses, on any Bank Holiday! I suppose this is how people always fetch up at meets in France? It's not come in in this benighted country yet."

"His fault!" said Christian, breathless and glowing. "He dar'd me! Where are you going to draw?"

"The ash-pit and the fowl-houses," replied Bill, picking up his reins. "Then the backstairs, and the kitchenmaid's bedroom. Judith and Mrs. Brady say he's taking all the fowl, and they're going to lay poison—I don't mean the fowl——"

"Isn't he bright this morning?" said Judith, looking down upon the party from an upper window, effectively arrayed in one of those lacy and lazy garments that invite, while they repudiate, society. "No, I'm not coming out. Too early for me. Come in and eat something—breakfast or lunch, anything—when you've done enough."

The hounds moved on and were soon busy in the screens of glossy laurel round the house. Other riders arrived. A fox was found, if not in the kitchenmaid's bedroom in some spot of almost equal intimacy, and the Hunt surged in and through yards, and haggards, outhouses, and gardens, the hounds over-running all the complicated surroundings of an Irish country-house, while every grade of domestic, forsaking his or her lawful occupation, joined in the chase.

Christian had betaken herself to a point on the avenue remote from the fray. A run, she told herself, would have tranquilised her, and made things seem more normal, but there was no prospect of one. "I'll wait till this rat-hunt is over," she thought, letting Joker stroll across the park towards a little lake, shining amidst bracken and bushes, a jewel dropped from heaven. A couple of stiff-necked swans floated in motionless trance upon it; black water-hens flapped in flashing, splashing flight to safety as Christian came near;

a string of patchwork coloured mandarin-ducks propelled themselves in jerks towards her, confident that any human being meant food. Two gigantic turquoise dragon-flies rose, with a dry crackle of talc-like wings, from a dead log under Joker's feet. One of them swung round the horse's head, and lit on his shaven neck. It brooded there, apparently unperceptive of the difference of this resting place from the one that it had abandoned; its dull globes of eyes looked as if sight was the last purpose for which they were intended. Joker stretched his long neck to nibble a willow twig, and the blue mystery, rising, remained poised over him for another moment of meditation, before it sailed away, sideways, on its own obscure occasions.

Christian sat in the sunshine, and thought about Larry, and wondered. She knew now that what she felt for him was no new thing. It had been with her always, not merely since the painting of her portrait, but always, unacknowledged yet implicit, ever since that first day when he had rescued her from Richard. Her intensely criticising, analytic brain refused to surrender to vague emotion. She was resolved to understand herself, to rationalise her overthrow. It was the difference, for which that half-hour of sunset was responsible, in the degree of what she felt, that bewildered her. Yesterday, she told herself, it was a deep, but well-controlled and respectable little stream. To-day it was a flood. "I must keep my feet," she thought; "I must not be swept away!" The thought of him was sometimes overwhelming, like the fire of a summer noon; sometimes meditative, and wound about with memories, like twilight, and the song of the thrush; even at its least, it had been the glow that lives behind the northern horizon in midsummer, witnessing to the hidden glory, during darkness, or the wistful glimmer of stars. Now, while the sun went higher, and all the hum of life rose, and the cries of the water-birds, the buzz of insects over the bright lake, became more insistent, and the blue and lovely morning spread and strengthened round her, criticism and analysis failed. She could

only think of him, helplessly, saying to herself what she had once heard a peasant woman say: "My heart'd open when I thinks of him."

Across the park came repeated notes from the horn, the baying of hounds, and the screams that celebrate with orthodox excitement the death of a fox. The rat-hunt was over. Joker lifted his spare, aristocratic head from the grass, and listened, with a wisp of dewy green stuff in his mouth. Christian looked at her watch. It was early still, not eight o'clock. A grey horse and its rider came forth from the dark grove of laurels. Larry was looking for her. She sighed; she did not know why. She thought of the old Mendelssohn open-air part-song:

"The talk of the lovers in silence dies,
They weep, yet they know not why tears fill their eyes."

The old, absurd words, that she had so often laughed at. She laughed again, but at herself, and sat still, watching the grey mare coming lightly over the sunny grass to her.

"They got him!" Larry shouted, as he came near. "The brute wouldn't run for 'em! Too full of hen, I suppose! They're going on now to the gorse in the high paddock. Why did you come away here?"

"Because I'm illogical. I like hunting, and I hate catching what I hunt. Besides, I wanted to think."

"Rotten habit," said Larry. "I won't have you changing your mind!"

Christian looked at him, and sighed again. He was on her right, and she took her hunting-crop in her left hand, with the reins, and stretched out her right hand to him. He caught it, and kissed her slender wrist above the glove. There came back to Christian, with a rush, the remembrance of the May morning at the kennels when he had kissed her wrist. That had been the left wrist. The kiss had meant more to her than it had to him. Now, as she met his eyes she knew that she and he stood on level ground.

Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel? Those even, who pin it down, and set it up in a glass case in the cause of science and for the edification of an inquisitive public, are not wholly to be commended, praiseworthy though their intentions may be. Let a rule of silence, therefore be observed, as far as may be. What this boy and girl said to each other, is their secret, not ours.

The gorse in the high paddock held a fox; several, in fact, a lady having reared a fine young family there without any anxieties as to their support, thanks to the votive offerings of crows and rabbits, obsequiously laid on her doorstep, by her best friend, and her most implacable enemy, Mr. William Kirby, M.F.H. In recognition, no doubt, of these attentions, the lady in question permitted one of her sons to afford a little harmless pleasure to her benefactor, and this, having included a lively gallop of some three miles, ceased in a plantation where was the place of safety that had been indicated to the beginner, and ceased appositely, at an hour that made a late breakfast at Castle Ire a matter obvious, even imperative, for those who were not prepared to await, in patient starvation, that very inferior repast, an early lunch.

Young Mrs. Kirby had not lost, with matrimony, the habit of having her own way.

"No, Christian, you're not going home. You haven't seen Baby, and he really looks *rather* sweet in his new——" (a negligible matter, whatever the attire the formulae being unvaried)—"and, besides," continued young Mrs. Kirby, with decision, "I want to talk to you."

Being talked to by Judith was an adequate modern equivalent for an interview with the "Jailer's Daughter," as a method of obtaining information.

Christian trembled for the secret of the pearl.

"Bill tells me," began Judith, after the late breakfast had been disposed of, settling herself luxuriously in an armchair in the round tower-room which she had made her own sitting-room and lighting a cigarette, "that our tenants—I

mean Papa's people—are getting rather nasty. Of course, there was that disgraceful business when your mare was killed but I don't mean that—Bill thinks old Fairfax was right in advising Papa to do nothing about that—but about this archaic nonsense of feudal feeling and not selling the property. Of course he's bound to lose by the sale, but the longer he waits the worse it gets."

"I don't think it's only feudal feeling—he says he can't afford to sell," began Christian.

"Oh, I know all that, my dear," interrupted Judith; "'the infernal mortgagees, and the damned charges, and that blackguard rebel, young Mangan, who cut the ground from under his feet,' and so on. I've heard it all from Papa, exactly five thousand times. But the point is that there was a meeting at Pribawn, with the priest in the chair, and there were furious speeches, and they talked of boycotting Papa, and some steps *ought* to be taken. It's an intolerable nuisance being boycotted, if it's nothing else, and most expensive. I was with the O'Donnells that time when they were boycotted—up at five every morning to milk the cows and light the kitchen fire, and having to get every earthly thing by post from London!"

"I'll take as many steps as you like," said Christian, "if you'll only tell me where to take them."

Judith took her cigarette out of her mouth, and blew a ring of smoke, regarding her younger sister the while with a shrewd and wary blue eye.

"I've often said to you, my dear child," she began, in a voice that seemed intended to usher in a change of subject, "that if you *won't* take an interest in men, *they* won't take an interest in you."

"Then why repeat the statement?" said Christian, wondering what Judith was working up to, and girding herself for battle; "true and beautiful though it is!"

"Because, my dear—and I may say I speak as one having authority and not as the scribes—in *my* opinion, and judging by what I perceived with about a quarter of one eye at

breakfast, you have only to hold up your little finger, in a friendly and encouraging manner, and our young friend and relative, Mr. Coppinger, will—I admit I don't quite know what people do with little fingers in these cases, something affectionate, no doubt!"

"I thought your authority would have extended to little fingers!" broke in Christian, sparring for wind, and wishing she were not facing the window; "in any case, I fail to see what mine, in this instance, has to say to our being boycotted?"

"My dear girl," said Judith, leaning forward, and speaking with solemnity, "the priests won't want to fall foul of anyone with as much money as Larry!"

Christian was silent; she had not anticipated quite so direct an intervention in her personal affairs as was now being discovered, and she felt that her pearl was melting in the fierce solvent of Judith's interest and curiosity.

"I know it's a bore about his religion, and his politics are *more* than shaky, but you know, in a way, it's rather lucky, in view of the mess Papa's got everything into, to have someone on that side," went on Judith, who was far too practical to be influenced by that malign Spirit of the Nation who had so persistently endeavoured to establish herself as one of the family at Mount Music. "All I'm afraid of is that Papa may begin to beat the Protestant drum and wave the Union Jack! Such nonsense! The main thing is that Larry himself is quite all right!"

"I'm sure he would be gratified by your approval!" Judith's patronage was somewhat galling; Judith, who was quite pleased with Bill Kirby!—Good, excellent Bill, but still——! Christian's colour betrayed her, and she knew it, and knowing also the remorseless cross-examination that the betrayal would immediately provoke, she decided to anticipate it.

"As a matter of fact," she went on, "he—we——" she hated the crudity of the statement.

"You're engaged!" swooped Judith, with the speed of a hawk. "Excellent girl!"

Christian found the commendation offensive.

"I assure you it's quite without either political or religious bias!" she said defiantly. She had failed to keep her secret, but she went down with her flags flying.

CHAPTER XXIX

Barty Mangan fulfilled his father's behests, and on Saturday, he drove his mother to Coppinger's Court.

He drove a motor well; not brilliantly, like Larry, because Barty did nothing brilliantly, but capably and gently, with consideration for donkey-carts, with respect for horses, with kindness towards pedestrians, even without animosity towards cur-dogs. The surprising aspect of the fact was that he should be able, in any degree, to handle a car, the control of energy being an effort foreign to his nature. What in his mother was laziness, was with him transmuted to languor; his father's vigour and decision became in Barty a sort of tepid obstinacy, and the Doctor's fierce and fighting allegiance to his Church reappeared in his son as a peevish conscientiousness, that had provoked a friend of the family to say: "Barty's a dam' bad solicitor! He'll take up no case but what pleases him, and he'll touch nothing if he thinks he'll make money out of it!"

"Ah! He was always a fool for himself!" replied, heartily, Barty's great-aunt, Mrs. Cantwell, to whom the comment had been offered.

One aspect of the practical affairs of life, and one only, had power to rouse Barty from the dreamy passivity which had excited Great-Aunt Cantwell's contempt. Where Ireland and Irish politics came into question, some deep spring of sentiment and enthusiasm in him was touched, and all the force that he was capable of became manifest. All the strength and tenacity that were in him were concentrated in the cause of Nationalism; Ireland was his religion, and he felt himself to be one of her priesthood.

There are some gentle natures, with deep affections, but without much brain-power in whom an idea, a mental attitude, and especially a personal liking or disliking, is very easily implanted; yet, easily as it is introduced, once it has taken hold it can never be dislodged. The intellect has not energy enough for reconstruction; it accepts too readily, and, once saturated, the stain is indelible, because there is no power of growth.

Behold, then, Barty, gentle and obstinate, timid and an enthusiast, loving, yet implacable, seated in Larry's studio, regarding with submissive adoration the being compact of the antithesis of his qualities, and ready, for that being's sake, to make any sacrifice save that of renouncing him.

The being in question, wholly and feverishly absorbed in his own affairs of the heart, while bound by his oath to say nothing about them, brought himself with difficulty to attend to the retrospect of financial operations, hitherto postponed, but now insisted upon, by his man of business.

"Oh, first-rate, old chap—quite all right—good business!——" With these, and similar interjections, did the employer ratify and approve of his agent's transactions. Barty's legal training abetted his conscientiousness, and in his mild and monotonous brogue he laid before Larry a statement of his money matters that was as unsparing in detail as it was accurate.

"So now you see," he concluded, "I didn't act without careful consideration, and I consulted me fawther, besides others of experience in such matters. I believe there are people who are saying we sold too cheap to the tenants. But, on the other hand, the money's good and safe now; you have a certain and secure income, and you're in a very favourable position in the eyes of the people."

Larry pulled himself from reverie to ejaculate further general approval; then he rose from the table, upon which Barty's books had been displayed, and drawing forward an easel on which was a framed canvas covered by some vivid oriental drapery, he arranged it carefully with regard to the

light. Then he caught away the drapery, stepping back, quickly, from the easel.

"What do you think of that, Barty?"

Barty, who was short-sighted, stood up and adjusted his eye-glasses, while he endeavoured to readjust his ideas, and to abandon the realms of business for those of art.

"But you know, Larry," he apologised, "I know nothing about paintings. You wouldn't know what tomfoolery I mightn't——" The apology broke off abruptly.

"Oh, God!" he muttered, feeling, in the shock of meeting her eyes, as if a sudden wind had swept his mind bare of business, of Larry, of all things save Christian, "it's herself!"

His sallow face had turned a dull red. He moved back a step or two, and then went forward again. The easel was low, and Barty was very tall; he went on his knees, and gazed, speechless.

Thus might a devout Russian have greeted a lost icon, and worshipped, silently, a re-found saint. Larry, equally absorbed, as any painter will understand, in the contemplation of his work, took no heed of its effect upon Barty.

"By Jove!" he murmured, drawing a big breath, "I wonder if I did it! I don't feel as if I had—something outside me——" He stopped; he felt as if Christian herself were there; he felt as if her arms were round him, his head upon her bosom. He was giddy with emotion. Scarcely knowing what he did he walked across the room, and stared out of the window, looking across his own woods to the woods of Mount Music.

That morning he had said good-bye to her for three long days. She had met him at the old stepping stones across the Ownashee, and she had made him renew his promise of silence until her return; he was sorry he couldn't tell old Barty; but no matter, nothing mattered, except the marvel that she was his. He whispered adoration to her, breathing her name again and again, crowning it, as with a wreath, with those old, familiar adjectives that had so lately

become intense with new meaning for him; he forgot Barty, forgot even her portrait, as he thought of herself.

Barty came over to him; the two young men, with their common secret, suspected by neither, a secret that for one was a living ecstasy, and for the other an impossible ideal, stood silent, full of their own thoughts. Barty spoke first.

"It's a wonder to me! I didn't think you could paint like that, Larry! I didn't think anyone could!"

"Well, no more I can, really. This was a sort of a miracle and it painted itself."

The same impulse moved them both, and they returned to the easel on which was the picture, but with a quick movement Larry flung the drapery over the frame again and hid the picture.

"Didn't you say you had a message for me from your father?"

Barty accepted the change of subject with his accustomed resignation to Larry's moods.

"I have. He said he'd be at home to-morrow afternoon —that's Sunday—and he wanted to see you on very special business."

"Do you know what about?" Larry asked, without interest, while he arranged the many-coloured silken drapery in effective folds over the picture.

"I believe old Prendergast's dying."

Barty hesitated; then, remembering that his father had not enjoined secrecy, he rushed into his subject. "Larry, I believe the chance we've been waiting for is come—or as good as come!"

"Do you mean that it's Prendergast the Member who's dying? Do you mean my getting into Parliament?"

Larry swung round on Barty, and fired the questions at him, quick as shots from a revolver.

The colour rose again in Barty's face. His dark, short-sighted eyes, that were set on Larry, had a sudden glow in them. He nodded.

"He's likely dead by now! Oh Larry!" he cried, panting

in his eagerness. "May be the chance has come at last! I believe you might be the man Ireland wants! I believe you might take Parnell's place! Me fawther says you're certain to be nominated, and there's no opposition, of course. Anyhow, if there were, itself, you'd go in flying, just the same! You're the man we're all waiting for! Larry, old cock! The day will come when I'll be bragging that I was the one first gave you the notion to go into politics!"

Larry was gazing at his man of business, whose aspect, it may be conceded, was at this moment singularly at variance with the usual conception of such a functionary. The man of business gazed back at him, the glow intensifying behind his eye-glasses and gathering energy from the answering gleam in Larry's eyes.

"The Bloody Wars!" uttered Larry, slowly and quite irrelevantly, and with great emphasis. "By all the crosses in a yard of check! Let me hold on to something and think! This is a game and a half! I must think furiously!"

"Do not!" exclaimed Barty; "don't think at all! Don't be wasting time like that! No man ever had a greater chance than this! Lep at it, Larry, old lad! Give me the word I want, and I'll wire the Doctor to-night—a message he'll understand, and no one else. Oh Larry!" he implored, "don't cry off now! You've pots of money; you can do any damn thing you like! If you refuse this chance now you'll only regret it the once, and that'll be all your life!"

Then did that mysterious and mighty agency, the warp that a mind has received in childhood, come to reinforce the enthusiasms and ambitions of youth, and urge Larry to assent. That other and nobler Spirit of the Nation woke, and the passionate, irreconcilable voice, that had first spoken to him when he was a little boy, woke and uttered itself again, shouting to him its wild summons at a moment when the tide of life was running fiercest in him, when every emotion was at highest pressure and calling for great adventure.

"All right, Barty, my son, I'm for it!" said Larry, with the assumption of outward calm, when heart and pulses are pounding, that has been claimed as one of the assets of a public school education, and is, even without that advantage, the birthright of such as young Mr. Coppinger.

CHAPTER XXX

LARRY bicycled up to the white chapel on the hill, to Second Mass, on the following morning. He rode fast through the converging groups of people, on foot, on outside cars, in carts, on horseback. It was four years since he had last attended a service there, and to many of the assembled congregation he had become a stranger. None the less there was no hesitation in any man's mind in identifying him; these were people who knew a gentleman when they saw one, and the young owner of Coppinger's Court was the only gentleman ever to be seen at the white chapel on the hill.

Therefore it was that Larry's right hand was seldom on his handle-bar, as he skimmed through the people, decent and dark-dressed in their Sunday best, who saluted with a long-established friendship and respect this solitary representative of their traditional enemies, the landlords.

There cannot be in the world a people more unfailingly church-going than those sons and daughters of Rome who are bred in Southern Ireland. Larry looked down, from his pew in the gallery, at the close ranks of kneeling figures, and thought with compunction how long it was since he had been in a church, and thanked God that he had come home to his own people, and that their religion was his. He followed the words of the service with a new realisation of their ancient beauty. He trembled with an unfamiliar emotion, as, in the charged silence of the crowded chapel, the bell tinkled and the censer clashed, sounds that have in them at such moments a heart-shaking power, magnetic, mystical. He heard nothing of the sermon; in his eager

mind two thoughts raced side by side, now one, now the other, leading. These two marvels that had befallen. That Christian should love him; this had the mastery, irradiating all; but with the vivid sense of fellowship and communion that the service brought the other thought, the old dream that was coming true of standing for these people, of making their interests his, their welfare his care, moved him profoundly.

Outside in the chapel yard, after the service, the congregation was in no hurry to disperse. Larry looked about him, and found many friendly eyes set on him. Larry, too, had a friendly heart, and he bethought him that, as a future M.P., he should lose no opportunity of intercourse with his constituents. He recognised the solid presence of John Herlihy, an elderly farmer who had been one of the largest of his own late tenants, and he went across the yard to where he stood and shook hands with him.

"Fine day, John! Good and hot for the harvest! Got your threshing done yet?"

"'Tis very warm, sir," answered John Herlihy, correcting, as is invariable, Larry's employment of the vulgar adjective "hot"; "very warm entirely, and sure I have my corn threshed this ten days, the same as yourself!"

"Nothing like taking time by the fetlock, is there, John!" chaffed Larry (who, until that moment, had been unaware that he possessed any corn); "it's a good harvest all round, isn't it?"

"Well, pretty fair, thank God!"

"And the country's quiet?"

"Never better, sir, never better!" responded John Herlihy, weightily; but something in his cool eyes, grey and wise as a parrot's, impelled Larry, in his new-born sense of responsibility, to further questioning.

Mr. John Herlihy was a man of the order to whom the label "respectable" inevitably attaches itself (that adjective which acts as a touch-stone in the definition of class, and is a compliment up to a certain point, an offence higher up

the scale); one of those sound and sensible and thrifty farmers who are the strength of Ireland, and are as the stones of a break-water, over which the storm-froth of the waters of politics sweeps unheeded.

"Well," Larry went on, "it wasn't a very nice way that those Carmodys up at Derrylugga treated Miss Christian Talbot-Lowry the other day! Killing her mare under her, the cowardly blackguards!"

The grey parrot eyes scanned Larry, summing him up, determining how far he might be trusted, deciding that an oblique approach might be most advisable.

"Major Lowry's a fine gentleman," said John Herlihy, largely; "a fine, easy, *grauver* man! I declare I was sorry to me heart when he gave up the hounds! If it was to be only a scold or a curse from him, ye'd rather it, and to have he be goin' through the country!"

"Then what have people against him? Good God!" cried Larry, hotly. "It's too easy he is! *I* wouldn't have let those devils off as easy as he did!"

"I heard the Priest and a few more, was above at Mount Music ere yesterday," said John Herlihy, in a slightly lowered voice, "about the sale of the property they were, I b'lieve. You done well, Master Larry, you got quit o' the whole kit of us!"

Having thus shelved the controversial subject, Mr. Herlihy, laughing heartily at his own jest, moved towards his horse and car, that were hitched to the chapel gate, and let down the upturned side of the car.

"Come! Get up, woman! Get up!" he called to his wife, a prosperous lady, in a massive, blue, hooded cloak, who had been standing by the gate, patiently waiting his pleasure; "don't be delaying me this way!"

He winked at Larry, scrambling on to the car.

"What *tashpy* he has!" remarked Mrs. Herlihy, benignantly, as Larry shook hands with her.

"Ah, you spoil him, Mrs. Herlihy! You should dock his oats!" said Larry, laughing into her jolly, round, red

face, that was glistening with heat under the heavy cloth hood. "It's a grand hot day, isn't it?"

"'Tis very warm, sir, indeed," corrected Mrs. Herlihy, as she mounted the car with an agility as competent, and as unexpected, as that of a trespassing cow confronted with a stone-faced bank.

Larry went home, and continued a letter to Christian that he had begun over night. He told her of Barty's visit, and of all that it was likely to involve. He said that he was very lonely, and he believed she had been gone a year. Even Aunt Freddy had bolted off to Dublin, on urgent private affairs, which meant the dentist, as usual. He would go over to see Cousin Dick, only that he was absolutely bound to go into Cluhir. At this point he entered anew upon the subject of his political future, and what it meant to him. Of the fun he would have canvassing the electors. Christian would have to come round with him, and in very obdurate cases there was always the classical method of the Duchess of Devonshire to be resorted to! Already, he said, he was frightfully interested in the whole show, and he meant—several pages were devoted by Larry to his intentions.

Christian, far away in the County Limerick, received the letter with her early cup of tea, and, as she read it, felt her soul disquieted within her. The conjunction of the stars of Love and Politics presaged, she felt, disaster—as if the question of religon had not been complicating enough! Even had her gift of envisaging a situation by the light of reason failed her, that spiritual aneroid, which, sensitive to soul-pressure, warned her intuitively of coming joy or sorrow, ill luck or good fortune, had fallen from set fair to stormy. She had gone to sleep with sunshine in her heart; she awoke in clouds, dark and threatening. She read Larry's letter, and knew that the foreboding would come true.

It is probable that no human being was ever less the prey of intuitions or presentiments than was young Mr. Coppinger, as he bicycled lightly into Cluhir along the solitary

steam-rolled road of the district, a typical effort of Irish civilisation, initiated by Dr. Mangan, that had proposed to link Cluhir with the outer world, but had died, like a worn-out tramp, at the end of a few faltering miles, on the steps of the work-house hospital at Riverstown. The road ran along the bank of the great river, with nothing save a low fence and a footpath between it and the water. The river was still and gleaming. Masses of dove-coloured cloud, with touches of silver-saffron, where their lining showed through, draped the wide sky, in over-lapping folds. The planes of distance up the broad valley were graduated in tone by a succession of screens of lumious vapour that parcelled out the landscape, taking away all colour save that bestowed by the transparent golden grey of the mist. The roofs of Cluhir made a dark profile in the middle distance, the lower part of the houses hidden in the steaming mist, and the beautiful outline of the twin crests of Carrigaholt was like a golden shadow in the sky above them. The spire and the tower of the two churches of Cluhir, rose on either side of the pale radiance of the river, with the slender arch of the bridge joining them, as if to show in allegory their inherent oneness, their joint access to the water of life. Religion counted for but little with Larry in those days, yet as the wonder of beauty sank into his soul, that was ever thirsty for beauty, the thought of what it would mean for Ireland if the symbol of the linking bridge had its counterpart in reality sprang into his eager mind. Then he thought of himself and Christian, and knew that religion could never come between him and her, and, as the close-followed thought of what these last days had brought, rose in his mind, the wonder of it overwhelmed him. He told himself that the only possible explanation of her caring for such as he, was that Narcissus-like, she had seen her own image reflected in his heart, and had fallen in love with it. The fancy attracted him; he rode on, his mind set on a sonnet that should fitly enshrine the thought, and politics and religion, symbols and ideals, faded, as the stars go out when the sun comes.

For the last couple of miles before Cluhir was reached the road and the river ran their parallel course in a line that was nearly direct, and, from a long way off, Larry was aware of the figure of a man and woman and a dog, preceding him towards the town. He noted presently that the dog had passed from view, and then he saw the man and the woman hurry across the road and pass through the gateway of a field. He was soon level with the gate. There was a little knot of people just within the field, and in the moment of perceiving that the woman was Tishy Mangan, he also saw that a fierce fight was in progress between two dogs.

"Oh, stop them, stop them!" Tishy was screaming. "That's my father's dog, and he'll be killed!"

She belaboured the dogs, futilely, with her parasol.

The man who was with her, a tall and elaborately well-dressed young gentleman with a red moustache, confined himself, very wisely, to loud exhortations to the remainder of the group, who were lads from the town, to call off their dog; and the remainder of the group, with equal wisdom and greater candour, were unanimously asserting that they would be "in dhread" to touch the combatants. The dogs were well matched—strong, yellow-red Irish terriers; each had the other by the side of the throat, and each, with the deep, snuffling gurgles of strenuous combat, was trying to better his hold on his enemy.

Larry, swift in action as in thought, was off his bicycle and into the ring without a second of hesitation.

"Catch your dog by the tail," he shouted to the boys, while he performed the like office for the Doctor's dog. "Now then! Into the river with them!"

The two dogs, fast in each other's jaws, were lifted, and were borne across the road to the edge of the footpath, below which the river ran, deep and strong.

"Now then!"

The two rough, yellow bodies were swung between Larry and his coadjutor.

"Now! Let 'em go!"

The dogs flew like chain-shot through the air, and, with a tremendous splash disappeared from view in the river. They rose to the surface still keeping their hold of one another, and sank again. A second time they rose without having loosened their grip, but at their third appearance they were apart.

"Now boys! Cruisht them well, or they'll be at it again when they land!"

The "cruishting," which means pelting with stones, succeeded. The enemies landed at different points. Miss Mangan's charge was recaptured, his antagonist was stoned by his owners until out of range, and the incident closed.

It was not, however, without result.

"I think you never met Captain Cloherty, Mr. Coppinger?" said Tishy, with a glance at Captain Cloherty that spoke disapproval. "He's not as useful in a fight as you are, though he *is* in the Army!"

"My branch of the service mends wounds, it doesn't go out of its way to get them!" returned Captain Cloherty, composedly, "and I haven't any use for getting bitten."

"Mr. Coppinger wasn't so nervous!" retorted Miss Mangan, scorchingly, "and it's well for me he wasn't! What'd I say to the Doctor if I had to tell him his pet dog was dead?"

"Something else, I suppose!" suggested Captain Cloherty, his red moustache lifting in a grin that Miss Mangan found excessively exasperating; "it wouldn't be the best time to tell the truth at all!"

"How funny you are!" said Tishy, with a blighting glance. "It's easy to joke now, when Mr. Coppinger has done the work!"

She swept another glance of her grey eyes at Larry, very different from that that she had bestowed upon the callous Cloherty.

Few young men object to exaltation at the expense of another, especially if that other has two or three inches the

advantage in height, and they are themselves not unconscious of deserving. Larry led his bicycle and walked beside Tishy, and found pleasure in meeting her again after four years of absence. For one thing, she had become even better-looking than he remembered her—turned into a thundering handsome young woman, he thought—and it became him, as an artist, to be a connoisseur in such matters.

"Oh, so you're going to see the Doctor, are you?" she said, "I know he was expecting you." She hesitated. "I told him I thought I'd be at Mrs. Whelply's this afternoon. He—he might be surprised if he thought I had Tinker out, and that he was in a fight——"

"I'll keep it dark," Larry said, reassuringly, while he wondered if the protecting darkness were also to envelop Captain Cloherty, R.A.M.C. He thought, on the whole, perhaps, yes.

CHAPTER XXXI

MAJOR TALBOT-LOWRY had been in a passion for three days, and Lady Isabel, who had borne the storm alone, longed for Christian's return, as the lone keeper of a light-house might long for the support of his comrade during a gale.

Judith came to visit her parents on Monday, but Judith was very far from being Christian, and could be relied on merely as far as a counter-irritant might prove of service.

"Well, of course, it was abominable impertinence of the priest to come up with the tenants to try and bully you, Papa, but you know, I see their point." Thus, Judith, annoyingly, and with pertinacity.

"You do, do you!" interjected Judith's progenitor, his once ruddy face now a congested purple. "It seems to me, Judith, you're always deuced ready to see any one's point but mine!"

"After all," went on Judith, with all the self-confidence and intolerance of five and twenty, "it's in your interest to sell, just as much as theirs to buy! With this detestable Government in power it will be a case of the Sibylline Books. You'll see the Nationalists will have it all their own way, and the next Act——"

"Nationalists!" roared the Major, sitting upright in his chair, and panting, his utterance temporarily checked by the sheer pressure of all that he wished to say. "Don't talk to me of Nationalists! Common thieves! That's all they are! There's no Nationalism about *them!* Call it Socialism, if you like, or any other name for robbery! They'd look very blue if *we* took to shouting 'Ireland a Nation!' and expecting to come in at the finish! They mightn't be

able to call us English invaders and to steal our property then! English! I've got Brian Boroihme in my pedigree and that's more than they can say! A pack of half-bred descendants of Cromwell's soldiers! That's what they are, and the best of them, too! That's the best drop of blood they've got!" Dick shouted, veering in the wind of his own words like a rudderless ship in a storm. "That's what gives them tenacity and bigotry! Look at the old places that they're squeezing the old families out of! It's the Protestant farmers and the Religious Orders that are getting them, swarming into them like rats! Don't tell me that I and my family aren't a better asset to any country than a lot of fat, lazy Monks and Nuns!"

"But, Papa, they're not all fat!" said Judith, beginning to laugh.

"Deuce a many of them's thin for want of plenty to eat!" returned Dick, with the confidence of a man whose faith in his theories has never been interfered with by investigation. He was recovering his temper, having enjoyed the delivery of his diatribe; and the fact that he had not only silenced Judith but had tickled her to a laugh, restored his sense of domination.

Poor old King Canute, with the tide by this time well above the tops of his hunting-boots, and all the familiar landmarks becoming submerged, one after the other! It may be easy to deride him, but it is hard not to pity him.

This was on Monday, and Christian returned from her week-end visit that evening. Judith stayed, and went with Christian to her room.

"Well, my dear," she began, eagerly, as the door closed, "when are you going to announce it?"

Christian sat down on her bed. She was looking very tired.

"Never, I think!"

Without paying attention to Judith's exclamation she took a newspaper out of the pocket of her top-coat, and handed it to her sister.

"This is this evening's paper. I got it at the Junction. Read that." She pointed to a paragraph.

Judith read it; then she dropped the paper, and gazed at Christian with dramatic consternation.

"The idiot!" she said, at length. "Couldn't you stop him?"

"He had promised years ago. I didn't try. He couldn't break his word."

"Oh, rot!" said Judith, briefly.

"You know he couldn't, Judy."

"Well, you know, this will finish him with Papa," said Judith, gloomily. "He's bad enough as it is about the sales to the tenants, and I was prepared for rows over the religious business, of course, but this——! Can't you——"

"I can't do anything," interrupted Christian, getting up. "I heard from him this morning, fearfully keen about it, but he didn't know then if the Party were going to adopt him. Evidently they have."

"Trust them for that!" said Judith, with a heavy groan. "I suppose Larry thinks we shall all be delighted! What fools men are! Bill did say once that it had been suggested —oh, ages ago, when Larry came of age; Ma-in-law told him—but we thought it had died out."

Christian hardly heard what she said. She was standing at the open window, in the stillness that tells of intense mental engrossment. Self-deception was impossible for her; her mind was too acute for tolerance of subterfuge; and for her, also, away and beyond the merciless findings of intellect was the besetment of presentiment, intuition, inward convictions that can override logical conclusions, words that are breathed in the soul as by a wind, and, like the wind, are born and die in mystery.

The last of the daylight had gone; there was a touch of frost; the sky was clear and hard, the stars shone with sharp brilliance, some of them had long, slanting rays on either hand that looked like wings of light; a new moon glittered among them, keen and clean, and vindictive as a scimitar;

in the quiet, the low murmur of the Broadwater pervaded the night. Judith watched her sister with unconsciously appraising eyes, noting the straight slenderness of her figure, the small, high-held, dark head.

"Old people are intolerable!" she thought; "she shall *not* sacrifice herself to Papa's prejudices! If she likes Larry she shall have him!"

But she was too wise to argue with Christian.

Dick Talbot-Lowry, though now arrived at the age of sixty-nine, was as unconvinced as ever of the fact that time had got the better of him, and that its despotism was daily deepening. He admitted that he had become something of an invalid, but that his elder daughter should have classified him as an old person would have appeared to him as absurd and offensive. There are minds that keep this inveterate youthfulness; that learn nothing of age, and forget nothing of youth. It is an attitude sometimes charming, sometimes undignified, always pathetic. Christian saw old age as a tragedy, a disaster, to alleviate which no effort on the part of the young could be too great; the pathos and the pity of it were ever before her eyes. In contest with her father, if contest there were to be, she would go into the arena with her right hand tied behind her back.

Without any definite admission of failure, Major Talbot-Lowry had been brought to submit to having his breakfast in bed, and Robert Evans, a sour and withered Ganymede, was the bearer of it. He was also the bearer of any gossip that might be available, and seldom failed to provide his master with a stimulant and irritant. On the morning following on Christian's return it was very evident that intelligence of unusual greatness seethed in the cauldron wherein fermented Mr. Evans' brew of news. His rook-like eye sparkled, his movements, even that walk for whose disabilities it may be remembered that the pantry boy had thanked his God, were alert and purposeful.

"Ye didn't see the *Irish Times* yet, I think?" he began, standing over his master, and looking down upon him with

an expression as triumphant and malign as that of a carrion-crow with a piece of stolen meat. He rarely bestowed the usual honorifics upon Dick, considering that his five years' seniority relieved him of such obligations. "I wouldn't believe all I'd read in the papers, but this is true, anyway!"

"What's true?" said Major Dick, irritably; "you've forgotten the salt again, Evans! How the devil can I eat an egg without salt? Send one of the maids for it—don't go yourself," he added, as Evans left the room. "The old fool'd be all day getting it," he said to himself, with an old man's contempt for old age in another. "Now, then," as Evans returned, "what's your wonderful bit of news?"

"Ye can read it there for yourself," replied Evans, coldly; he was ruffled by the episode of the salt.

"Damn it, man, I can't read the paper and eat an egg!" snapped the Major. "Out with your lie, whatever it is!"

"Master Larry's chosen for the Member in place of Prendergast," said Evans, sulkily.

If Evans had been unfortunate in the way in which his sensation had been led up to, its reception left him nothing to desire. Dick was stricken to an instant of complete silence. Then he roared to Evans to take the damned tray out of his way, and to give him the (otherwise qualified) paper.

It would serve no purpose, useful or otherwise, to attempt to record Dick Talbot-Lowry's denunciations of Larry, of his religion, and of his politics; of, secondarily, his ingratitude, his treachery, and his lack of the most rudimentary elements of a gentleman. They lasted long, and lacked nothing of effect that strength of lung and vigour of language could bring to them. And Evans, the many-wintered crow, hearkened, and rejoiced that he was seeing his desire of his enemy.

"No! I won't eat it! Take it away—I don't want it, I tell you! Curse you, can't you do as you're bid?" Thus spake Dick Talbot-Lowry, flinging himself back on his pillows, and shoving the breakfast-tray from him. The hot

purple colour that had flooded his face was fading; his voice was getting hoarse and weak. Evans, with an apprehensive eye on his master's changed aspect, carried the tray out of the room.

There was a quick step on the stairs, and Larry came lightly along the landing.

"The Major up, Evans? No? Oh, all right! May I come in, Cousin Dick?"

He swung into the room.

Old Evans carefully shut the door behind him.

"Now me laddy-o!" he whispered, rubbing his hooked grey beak with one finger, and chuckling low and wheezily: "Now, maybe! Me fine young Papist! Ye'll be getting your tay in a mug! Hot and strong! Hot and strong!"

He moved away from the door with the tray of untouched breakfast things.

CHAPTER XXXII

Lady Isabel was returning from her accustomed housekeeping morning visit to Mrs. Dixon, when she was startled by the sharp outcry of an electric bell.

"Dick's room!" she said to herself, beginning to hurry; she hardly knew why.

A housemaid ran down the long passage in front of her, flying to the summons. Through the open door of the dining-room Lady Isabel saw Christian giving the dogs their breakfast.

"Papa's bell is ringing, dear," said Lady Isabel, breathing hard.

"I heard someone go up to his room just now," said Christian, languidly; "I haven't seen him this morning; I was in the yard with the dogs——"

Someone came down the stairs, headlong, two steps at a time. Larry's voice shouted:

"Christian! Cousin Isabel! Anyone——!"

There was urgency and alarm in the voice.

Lady Isabel and Christian were in the hall in an instant, and met Larry at the foot of the stairs.

"Cousin Dick's ill! A heart attack, I think—— I didn't know what to do for him——"

"I do!" said Christian, speeding upstairs.

Her mother followed her, and Larry remained in the hall. Of one thing he was quite certain, that he had better keep out of Cousin Dick's sight. His nerves were quivering from the interview that had been so shatteringly abbreviated. Had the friendly old setter, whose head at this moment was on his knee, while her limpid eyes swore to him that all her love was his, suddenly turned and rent him, it would scarcely

be a shock worse than that he had received. He had been undeterred by the ominous gloom of the Major's greeting; few young men have very keen perception of mood, and Larry, deeply self-engrossed, wildly happy, had flung at once into his theme, which, it need hardly be said, was Christian. Then the storm broke, and the lightning blazed, and the thunders of the house uttered their voice, while Larry, amazed, horrified, gradually, as the invective gathered volume and venom, becoming angry, stood in silence, and received in a single cloud-burst the bitter flood of long-pent prejudice, jealousy, and sense of injury.

"Dead!" Dick had roared; "I'd rather see her dead in her coffin than married to——"

The epithets that a hoarded hatred finds ready to hand when its pent force is released, come horribly from the lips of an old man. Yet, almost more horrible than the full tide of rage, was to see its ebb, as "the sick old servant" in Major Dick's bosom failed him, and his heart staggered and fainted in its effort to abet him in denouncing the young cousin who he thought had wronged him.

Larry sat, fondling the old setter's chestnut head, thinking it all over, flaming again at the remembered insults, quailing at the possibilities as they concerned Christian. Once she had appeared at the top of the stairs, and said the single word, "Better!" before she vanished.

One half of Larry's mind said "Better? What do I care? Better if he dies, if he comes between me and her!" The other, which was his deeper self, preserved the memory of Dick's greying face and frightened eyes, and was glad that relief had come.

At last Christian came to him, slowly and with a dragging step, down the wide staircase. Her face was white, her eyes were set in shadows.

"How is he?"

"Round the corner, I think. We've wired for Mangan."

"Christian, I want to explain—I said nothing—I never meant to annoy him. I began about you, and that—that we

loved each other. For we do, Christian, don't we?" He had her hands in his, he crushed them in his anxiety, his eyes implored her. "Then suddenly he began to abuse me like a madman! My religion, my politics, my treachery to my class—I can't tell you what he didn't say! And then he swore he'd rather see you dead than married to me. I don't know what I said—nothing, I think; he began to look as if he were dying himself, and I rang the bell and bolted for you."

"Poor boy!" said Christian.

He thought that her face as she looked at him was as it were the face of an angel, but the sorrow in it frightened him.

"Come into the study," she said, freeing her hands from his grasp; "we can't talk here."

The study door was open; he followed her in silence, and, shutting the door, sat down beside her on the sofa.

"Larry, we've got to face it, you know; we've got to face it," she began, and gave back to him her slender sensitive hand, as if to heal the wound of what the words implied.

"Face what?" said Larry, stubbornly, girding himself for resistance.

"Face delay—opposition——"

"I'll face opposition as much as you like, but I won't face delay! Why should we? We're of age. There's nothing against me!"

Christian smiled faintly.

"Dear child, I know that. It's not the facts that are against us, it's the fancies——"

"I won't be patronised!" said Larry, vehemently. "I'm not your dear child! I'm the man you've promised to marry! No one's fancies have a right to interfere with us!"

His arm was round her, and he felt her tremble. He loosed her hand, and with his hand that had held it he turned her face to his. Then he kissed her, many times, with an ever-growing abandonment as he felt the response that she tried in vain to withhold.

At length, in spite of him, she hid her face in his shoulder.

"No, Larry, no!" she gasped, her breath coming short. "Dearest, don't be cruel to me! How can I keep that promise! If you had seen Papa just now and Mother—her terror and her helplessness! How could I leave them? Supposing that I defied him, and married you, and that he died in one of these furies! Just think what that would be for us!"

"He wouldn't die!" said Larry, obstinately. "People don't die as easy as all that!" he added, with a fierce thought of regret that Dick had not gone out in this latest storm.

"Listen," said Christian, beseechingly. "Don't let us be in such a hurry. Everything needn't be settled at once. We'll ask Dr. Mangan how Papa is, and if there is real danger for him in these rages. He was nearly as bad on Saturday after the Priest and the tenants had been here."

Larry's face was dark; he was not used to opposition. His guardians and his spiritual directors had alike found that while he was easy to lead, he was a difficulty and a danger to drive. He was stirred to the depths now. The strain of receiving Dick's onslaught in silence, the shock of his collapse, and now the fire that Christian's nearness and dearness had lit in him, all broke his self-control. He held her to him.

"I will never let you go! Never——!" His lips were on hers again, life, with all its difficulties, was again forgotten, the rhyme of the Fairies' Well galloped in his hot brain:

"My heart in your hands, your heart in me."

The sound of the hall door opening, and the grinding roar of a motor engine running down, recalled them both to this troublesome world.

But in Christian's heart, whether from within or from without, a voice had spoken, telling the kisses, one by one, as though they were the petals of a flower. "This year,

next year, sometime, never!" If the last word had been "sometime," or "never," she knew not; she knew only that it what before her was the way of renunciation, she would find it a hard way to walk in.

Dr. Mangan stood, a massive presence, at the top of the stairs, and talked massively to Lady Isabel of Dick's condition.

"Very critical—no worries—nourishment—would he have a nurse?"

To which Lady Isabel, a poor, shaken, pallid Lady Isabel, with no more backbone than the shape of blancmange, which, it must be said, she somewhat resembled, replied: "*Nothing* would induce him!"

"Then I should like to have a little talk with Miss Christian," said the Big Doctor, beginning to walk downstairs, slowly, solemnly, solidly, like a trick-elephant at a circus.

Christian's quick ears had heard his voice on the stairs, and she met him in the hall. Larry stood irresolute at the door of the study. His eyes met those of the Doctor, and something during the interchange of glances suggested that his presence was not desired. He returned to the study and shut the door, and wished that he could have a word alone with the Doctor, just to put him up to what to say to Christian. He could hear the heavy rumble of the Doctor's bass voice, and the soft alto murmur of Christian's replies. She had the Irish voice, pitched on a low note, an instrument more apt for pathos than for gaiety, which is, perhaps, what gives to its gaiety so special a charm.

Larry stood by the window with his hands in his pockets, trying to steady himself. Deep under his panic uncertainty as to the strength of his hold on Christian, was the anger that Dick's denunciation had roused in him, and momently, as his mind went back over the interview, remembrance of the insults became more unendurable. Abuse from the old to the young, and from a sick man to a sound one, cannot fail to rankle, since it cannot be flung back. Generosity

may impose silence, but it cannot obliterate an insult or heal a wound.

Christian came into the room; he heard her come, but he would not look round. She slid her hand into his arm.

"Larry! Dear! Listen to me; there's no way out of it but patience! Dr. Mangan says he *must* be kept absolutely quiet, and have nothing to annoy him. He says he might die in an instant in one of those attacks. He's not himself now, Larry—so little makes him lose self-control——" She paused, but Larry did not speak. "You couldn't want me to sacrifice the little share of life left to him to our happiness; I know you couldn't! Larry, he's an old man; it can't be for very long——"

"I don't see that that follows," said Larry, implacably. "He had strength enough to blackguard me very thoroughly, and it hasn't done him any harm. It seems to me, *I'm* the one to be sacrificed!"

"He spoke to Mother about us—about what you said to him. He began about it the instant he could speak. She——" Christian hesitated, "she could only quiet him by saying there was no engagement between us."

"Then she said what wasn't true!"

"Oh, it *must* be true!" said Christian, desperately; "it's got to be true——"

"Very well," said Larry, moving away, so that her hand fell from his arm. "If it's got to be true I suppose there's no more to be said. I may as well go. After all, I daresay you're well quit of me. Your father says I'm a damned Papist and——"

"I won't listen to you!" broke in Christian. "What's the use of hurting me and hurting yourself like this? Larry, I'll wait for you for ever—you know that—time will make no difference. Don't make it harder for me than it must be!"

"You don't seem to think much about *me*," said Larry, with a still rage that was a new thing with him. He left her side, and walked steadily to the door; then he turned, and in a few quick steps came back to her. He put his hands

on her shoulders; he was not much taller than she, and his eyes looked straight into hers.

"Then it's true, is it? You're off it? You've given me the chuck?"

He spoke roughly, and gripped her harder than he knew, and in the tension of her nerves, the roughness of the words and action cut her like the stroke of a whip. Almost as if he had struck her, a splash of colour came in her face.

Larry was blind to the torture in her eyes, but he saw the quick red, and knew he had hurt her high spirit, and was glad.

"If you like to put it in that way!" said Christian, her head up, her mood answering his, "apparently it is the only thing to be done!"

There came a tap at the door. Dr. Mangan's voice said: "I'm going back to Cluhir now. Haven't you to meet Father Greer at twelve o'clock, Larry? I could give you a lift if you like——"

* * * * * *

From an early work on the Fauna of the Indian Forest the following extract may be quoted:

"The elephant's trunk then encircled the young man's body, and placing him gently upon its back, the huge creature ambled away with its prize to the depths of the jungle."

CHAPTER XXXIII

Little Mary Twomey, footing it into Cluhir on a misty Saturday morning, with a basket of fowl under her brown and buff shawl, was not sorry when, from a side road on the line of march, a donkey-cart, driven by an acquaintance, drew forth at the instant of her passing.

"God bless ye, John Brien," she said, when the suitable salutations and comments on the weather had been exchanged, with the rigorous courtesy observed by such as Mary Twomey and John Brien with one another, "this basket is very weighty on me——"

"Put it up on the butt, ma'am," responded John Brien. "Put it up, for God's sake, and let you sit up with it. Sure the ass is able for more than yourself!"

This referred, with polite facetiousness, to Mrs. Twomey's stature, and was taken by her in excellent part.

She uttered a brief screech. "Isn't it what they say they puts the best of goods in the small passels?" she demanded; "but for all, I wouldn't wish it to be too small altogether! 'Look!' I says to that owld man I have, 'Look! When I'll be dead, let ye tell the car-pennther that he'll make the coffin a bit-een too long, the way the people'll think the womaneen inside in it wasn't altogether too small entirely!'"

"Arrah, don't talk of dyin' for a while, ma'am!" said John Brien, gallantly. "Aren't you an' me about the one age, and faith, when you're dyin' I'll be sending for the priest for meself!"

"Well, please God, the pair of us'll knock out a spell yet!" responded Mrs. Twomey, cheerfully; "for as little as I am, the fly itself wouldn't like to die!"

John Brien did not question this assertion. "The 'fluenzy is very raging these times," he remarked.

"'Tis a nassty, dirty disease altogether, God help us!" said Mrs. Twomey, with feeling.

"It is, and very numerous," replied John Brien. "There's people dying now that never died before."

This statement presented no difficulty to Mrs. Twomey, since she had no desire to exult over Mr. Brien as being what is often called a typical Irishman, and was able to accept its rather excessive emphasis in the sense in which it was intended.

"I'm told Major Lowry is sick enough," went on John Brien; "an impression like, on the heart, they tells me."

"He have enough to trouble him," said Mrs. Twomey, portentously; "and I wouldn't wish it to him. A fine man he was. Ye'd stand in the road to look at him! The highest gentleman of the day!"

"Well, that's true enough," said John Brien, cautiously. "There's some says the servants in the house didn't get their hire this two years."

"Dirty little liars!" said Mrs. Twomey, warmly. "Divil mend them, and their chat! There isn't one but has as many lies told as'd sicken an ass! Wasn't I selling a score of eggs to the Docthor's wife a' Saturday, and she askin' me this an' that, and 'wasn't it said young Mr. Coppinger was to marry Miss Christhian Lowry'? Ah ha! She was dam' sweet, but she didn't get——" Mrs. Twomey swiftly licked and exhibited a grey and wrinkled finger—"*that* much from me!"

"Ha, very good, faith!" said John Brien; "them women wants to know too much!"

"And if they do itself," retorted Mrs. Twomey, instant in defence of her sex, "isn't it to plase the min that's follyin' them for the news! Yis! An' they too big fools to hear it for theirselves!"

John Brien, somewhat stupefied by this home thrust, made

no reply, but smote the donkey heavily, provoking it to a jog that temporarily jolted conversation to death.

At the next incline, however, Mrs. Twomey took up her parable again.

"Tell me now awhile, John, what day is this th' election is?"

"I d'no if it isn't Choosday week it is," replied John Brien, without interest. "There's two o' them up for it now. Young Coppinger, that was the first in it, and a chap from T'prairy. What's this his name is?—Burke, I think it is. Sure they had two meetin's after chapel at Riverstown last Sunday. Roaring there they were out o' mothor-cars. But it's little I regard them and their higs and thrigs!"

"Why wouldn't ye wote for Larry Coppinger, John?" said Mrs. Twomey, persuasively "and him 'All-for-Ireland'! A strong, cocky young boy he is too; greatly for composhing he is, an' painting, an' the like o' that. Sure didn't I tell him it was what it was he had a rag on every bush! 'Well,' says he, 'Mrs. Twomey,' says he, 'I'll have another rag on another bush soon,' says he. 'Sir,' says I to him, 'that much would not surpass your honour!' But faith, they're tellin' me now Burke'll have him bet out, and I'm sorry to me heart for it."

John Brien looked from one side of the road to the other, and ahead, between his donkey's ears. The mist was close round the cart as the walls of a room; the only sound was the thin wind singing in the telegraph wires.

"Mrs. Twomey," murmured John Brien, "the Clergy is agin him!"

"Oh, great and merciful Lord God!" said Mrs. Twomey. She said it without either irreverence or reverence. She merely wished to express to John Brien her comprehension of the importance of his statement.

Larry had flung himself into electioneering as an alternative to drink. That was how he put it to himself. He took rooms at Hallinan's Hotel, in Cluhir, in order to be on top

of the railway station, and the situation generally, and he had, moreover, a standing invitation to No. 6, The Mall, for any meal, at any hour of the day or night, that he found suitable. The district to be canvassed was a wide one, and day after day Larry and the faithful Barty went forth to interview "People of importance"; darkly-cautious publicans, with wives lurking at hand to make sure that "Himself" should do nothing rash; uninterested farmers, who "had their land bought," and were left cold by the differences 'twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee; and visits to "The Clergy" of all denominations, productive of much artificially friendly converse and no very definite promises.

Of Larry's own Communion, Father Tim Sweeny alone announced himself, unhesitatingly, as being of Larry's camp. Father Tim's hostility had not been proof against Larry's charms, more especially since these were combined with a substantial proof of the young candidate's interest in the decoration of the new chapel; and, at the gate of that chapel, (the site of which he did not forget that he owed to Larry) he attended one of Larry's meetings, and shook his bovine head at his flock, and bellowed ferocious commendation of the young man, who, he thundered, had not failed in his duty by the Church and the people. There was a downright, fighting quality in Father Sweeny that was large and stimulating. Larry felt that he had, at least, his own parish firmly at his back, and wished that he had a few more such as Father Tim to stand by him.

The Rev. Matthew Cotton (stiffened by Mrs. Cotton) said that to enter a hustings for a Home Ruler, of any variety, would be for him an unauthorised bowing down in the House of Rimmon, a simile that conveyed little to Larry, and nothing at all, allegorically, to his agent, Barty Mangan, though its practical interpretation presented no difficulties to either of them.

The Reverend Mr. Armstrong, Pastor of the Methodists, admitted to a preference for an "All-for-Irelander," as opposed to an Official Nationalist; but evaded the responsibility

of a promise by saying that he would lay the matter before the Lord, and would write later.

Neither did young Mr. Coppinger receive much encouragement from his own class. Bill Kirby, indeed, undertook to support him and even volunteered to go round with him on his canvassing expeditions, but this was considered by Larry's Committee as being of questionable advantage, even, possibly, affording to the enemy an occasion to blaspheme, and the offer (made, it may be said, at Judith's instigation) was declined.

Nor, as a matter of fact, was Larry himself disposed to take Bill Kirby's proffered hand. He told himself that he was done with that lot. He was bitterly angry with Christian. He said to himself that he would never forgive her; would never, if he could help it, see one of them again. At a word from her father she had chucked him; without a moment of hesitation, without a word to show that she was even sorry for her father's treatment of him. "Apparently it's the only thing to do!" she had said. That was all she thought of keeping a promise! What about leaving father and mother and sticking to your husband, he would like to know! These Protestants who talked such a lot about reading the Bible! It was quite true what old Mangan had said: "When all comes to all, a man must stick to his own Church!" All these others, these St. Georges, and Westropps, and old Ardmore, and the rest of them, had only been waiting to jump on him as soon as he put a foot out of the rut they all walked in. They had waited for the chance to make him a pariah. Now they had it. All right! He could face that. They should soon see how little he thought of them!

He pitched himself headlong into the contest. The weather had fallen from grace. October, having been borne in on the wings of a gale, was storming on through wind and wet, and the game of canvassing, that had seemed, on that sunny day when he had written to Christian, so "frightfully interesting," was beginning to pall. Boring as were

the personal interviews, and exhausting the evening oratory in town halls and school-houses, the Sunday meetings at the gates of the chapels were still more arduous. On each Sunday, during the period between the death of Daniel Prendergast and the election of his successor, did young Mr. Coppinger, with chosen members of his "Commy-tee"—he had learnt to accept the inflexible local pronunciation—splash from chapel to chapel, to meet the congregations, and to shout platitudes to them. Larry began to feel that no conviction—however fervently held—could survive the ordeal of being slowly yelled to a bored crowd from the front seat of a motor car. He told himself that he had become a gramophone, and a tired gramophone, badly in want of winding up, at that.

It would be of little avail to attempt to define the precise shade of green of young Mr. Coppinger's political flag; whether, as a facetious supporter put it, it was "say-green, pay-green, tay-green, or bottle." It is enough to say that it varied sufficiently from that of Mr. Burke to provide their respective followers with a satisfactory *casus belli.* The shades of political opinion in Ireland change, and melt and merge into each other as the years pass, even as the colours of her surrounding seas vary, deepening and paling with the changing clouds, yet affecting only the surface, leaving the sullen depths unchanged. Larry knew no more of Ireland than a boy can learn in his school holidays; it was only by degrees that he realised that in Ireland, as he now found it, the single element of discord that remained ever unchanged was Religion. He had spent the four most recent and most receptive years of his life in an atmosphere in which religion had no existence. The hem of its raiment might, perhaps, have been touched, when, as sometimes happened, the subject of a studio composition was taken from the Bible, or the Apocrypha. Then, possibly, would the young pagans of Larry's circle discover as much acquaintance with the Scriptures as would point a jest, and give an agreeable sensation of irreverence in discussing the details of the subject.

"There," thought Larry, "no one thought about your religion. No one cared if you had one, and the presumption was that you hadn't." But here, in these little Irish towns, the question of a man's private views on a matter that might be supposed to concern only himself, appeared of paramount importance. He listened to denunciations of Protestants until he felt, as he told the faithful Barty, that "for tuppence" he would change over himself; just as in some sections of the rival camp, he would have heard to weariness of the bigotry and errors of Romanism. He was brought, as many people more God-fearing than he have been brought, to debate the question as to whether a common atheism were not the only panacea for the mutual hatreds that, as appeared to him from his present point of view, ruled the Island of Saints. He and Barty would sit up over the dying embers of the dining-room fire of No. 6, The Mall, talking; wrangling, in a sort of country-dance of argument, in which they advanced and retired, and joined hands, and flung away from each other again; ending, generally, in such agreement as might be found in a common determination to lay all the blame for all the malice and uncharitableness at the door of the clergy of the two creeds; a comprehensive decision, and a consoling one, from the point of view of two laymen.

Larry, in his loneliness, had fallen into the habit of frequenting No. 6; of "taking pot-luck," of "dropping in," or of "turning in," all of which courses had been urged upon him by his captor, Dr. Mangan. Those great and special gifts of the Mangan family, the love of music, and the habit of it (which are not always allied) bestowed upon the household a charm that was almost more potent for Larry than any other could have been. At the end of a long day of canvassing, spent with companions who, he felt, only half trusted him, and were incapable of being amused by the things that amused him (a factor in friendship that cannot be valued too highly) it was comforting to "drop in" to the hospitable, untidy house, where, thanks to Mrs.

Mangan s early experiences, there was always good luck in the pot, and to spend a peaceful evening over the fire, smoking, and listening to the famous Mangan Quartet. Music was the initial point of contact between Larry and these people among whom he had once more been cast, and the Big Doctor was not unaware of the fact. Singly, or united, the Mangan voices, mellow, tuneful, singing songs of Ireland with artless grace and charm, wrought more in Larry's soul than he was aware of. Not only to his ears, but to his eyes also, the Mangan Quartet brought artistic satisfaction. The Big Doctor, with his sombre face and overhanging brow, looking, in the lamplight, like a Rembrandt burgomaster; Barty and his mother, pale and dark-eyed, recalling Southern Italy rather than Southern Ireland; and Tishy—Larry's eyes used to dwell longest on Tishy, her face lit by her most genuine feeling, the love of music, while her voice of velvet (of purple velvet, he decided) mourned for Patrick Sarsfield, or lamented with Emer for Cuchulain, or thrilled her listener with the sudden glory of "The Foggy Dew." Larry's own voice was habitually exhausted by the cart-tail oratory in which he daily expended it; it was enough for him to listen and look, shutting his mind to the past, living, as ever, in the present, like a wise man, because its bounty sufficed him.

CHAPTER XXXIV

At a little before this time a sufficiently epoch-making scene had taken place between Dr. Mangan and his daughter, following not long on that day when the elephant had conveyed his captive to the depths of the jungle.

"Tishy!" said the Big Doctor, looming large at the door of the dining-room where his daughter was engaged in trimming a hat, "come down to the surgery a minute; I want you."

The feather to which Miss Mangan had just imparted the correct "set," was only fixed in position with a precarious pin, none the less, Tishy, albeit vexed, did not delay. She had a well-founded respect for the Fifth Commandment, as far, at all events, as her father was concerned. She abandoned the hat, and followed the Doctor through the narrow hall-passage and into the surgery, with a promptness that she was not wont to exhibit in obeying an order that was not convenient.

Dr. Mangan had seated himself at his desk, and was writing. Tishy stood by the seat dedicated to patients; she wished to imply that she had been interrupted in her work, and that her time was of value.

"There now," said Dr. Mangan, thumping the envelope that he had just closed and directed, on the blotting-paper, with his big fist, "I want you to run round to Hallinan's with this for me."

"Is it a hurry?" asked Tishy, unwillingly.

"It is. It's to order rooms for Larry Coppinger. He's coming to stay in town till the election's over. Sit down there a minute."

Tishy obeyed, and the Doctor surveyed her attentively. The position that is assigned to patients in a doctor's consulting room is one that faces the light, pitilessly, inescapably; but for Tishy, this was a negligible disadvantage. A peacock butterfly looks its best in sunlight, and Tishy's dark bloom, and intent eyes of luminous grey, faced the glare of October sunlight with confident unconcern.

"A right-down handsome girl!" he had called her, to himself, more than once; now, he thought, she had good looks enough for any man in Europe. It was not his habit to betray his feelings; but as he sat there, appraising her, weighing her beauty, as a jeweller might appraise some rich-hued ruby that a kind fate had placed in his hands, sheer pride in her made him smile, and he was hard put to it to keep up the severity that he believed the occasion exacted.

"I've a couple of things to say to you," he resumed, "and you know as well as I do that I've no fancy for saying things twice. I've seen Ned Cloherty sneaking about the Mall very often lately—like as if he was waiting for somebody. I'm not saying it's for you or me he's waiting; you might know that better than I do. But he's no great ornament to the view there, or anywhere else, as far as I can see!"

Tishy put her strong, rounded chin in the air, and said, "I suppose other people have a right to use the roads as well as us!"

The Doctor was glad that his face was shadowed, as he noted the arrogant tilt of her head, and the smooth, cream-white pillar of her neck that it revealed, since the smile of paternal pride would not be denied. He didn't blame Ned Cloherty to be sneaking about after her; there wasn't her like in the county. But she very certainly was too good for the likes of Ned Cloherty. "Now, Babsey," he said, and Tishy knew that the old pet name denoted a satisfaction with her that might not otherwise betray itself, "you're a sensible girl, and I needn't go out of my way to tell you things that you're smart enough to see for yourself. You're

'pert enough without Latin'—as they say! Well, I'll just say one other thing to you, and it's this. Larry Coppinger's up for this election, and I've told him to use this house, like his own, as much as he wants to," the Doctor stood up and took a pocket-book from the breast-pocket of his coat. "You're to make it agreeable for him to come here. Mind that! And more than agreeable! I'll think very little of you if you don't have him at your feet before you're done with him!" he went on, selecting something from among the papers in the pocket-book as he spoke. "There's not a girl in Ireland that wouldn't half hang herself for the chance you'll have! And there's not a girl in Cluhir but will be gibeing you if you lose it!" He took a step towards where Tishy was sitting, and put his hand under his chin.

Her bright water-grey eyes were alight with mutiny; she laughed defiantly.

"Suppose I don't want it!"

Her father looked steadily at her; he saw, as clearly as if she had spoken, that the suggestion had excited her.

"Well, Babs," he said, with the laugh that always seemed an octave higher than matched with his voice, "if you're able to bring him to your feet—and I'm not saying you will! You might find it a bit of a job too!—you'll want a dandy pair of shoes on them! Put this in your pocket."

He had taken a ten-pound note out of his pocket-book, and he pushed it into Tishy's strong and supple white hand.

CHAPTER XXXV

GREAT pain paralyses the mind, as the torture of a limb makes the limb faint and helpless. When the heart-pain can be dealt with as a separate thing, it is no longer supreme.

This was the difference between Christian and Larry. Her love was herself, indivisible, a condition of her being. When it ceased, it would mean that the creature that called herself Christian Talbot-Lowry had ceased also. During the long, bright morning, after Larry and Dr. Mangan had departed together, she felt that this had happened; that the part of her that knew and suffered had gone away, or was lying dead in her. There was a weight in her breast, she could feel it, but she scarcely felt pain, only a great bewilderment, an incredulity that this thing, of whose reality her mind told her, but without conviction, should have happened to her, just precisely to her, out of all the people in the world. People have felt this when that iron shutter that is called Death has fallen between them and that one who was their share of the world. A part of them, some plausible imitation of them, can speak and act, and be extolled, perhaps, for facing the music stoutly; while the stricken thing that is themselves, is lying prone before the iron shutter; beating on it with broken hands, calling, and hearing no answer.

It was nearly a month now since Dick Talbot-Lowry had asserted his paternal rights, and had, following various classic and biblical precedents, sacrificed his daughter to his own particular formulæ of religion and politics. He would never know that it had been the appeal that weakness makes to strength that had given him his victory. When he spoke to

Lady Isabel of his scene with Larry, he told her that he had nipped the thing in the bud. The damned puppy of a fellow took for granted that Christian was in love with him; but here she was, going about as usual, as jolly as a sandboy; "in fact," Dick would say, plastering up with bromidic mortar the windows of the narrow dwelling wherein dwelt Lady Isabel's soul, "all's well that ends well!" With which valuable aphorism, sanctioned by a long and respectable past, the Major contentedly fed his heart, and tranquillised that of his wife.

Judith was less confident of the satisfactory end of all things. She was, in fact, exceedingly indignant that an engagement so entirely advantageous from all practical points of view should be broken off; "simply to gratify Papa's imbecile prejudices!" she declared, with her usual emphasis. "Christian, you were a fool to mind what he said or did. *He* wouldn't have died! Not a bit of him! Of course, Mother has got to agree with him—that's what he married her for!"

"Don't tire me, Judy, please," Christian would say, serenely. "It's all over now. These discussions only weary me. I assure you my philosophy is quite equal to the strain!"

"If that's the case, I don't know why you should look like a dying ghost!"

Judith had never entirely comprehended her younger sister, and she found her, as she said with indignation to the concurring Bill, absolutely dark and inscrutable over the whole affair.

"I know it's hit her hard, but nothing will make her admit it. I detest Spartan Boys!" said Judith.

The Spartan Boy in question, though aware of her sister's ardent desire to investigate her wounds, had no intention of removing the cloak that covered them. She wrapped it close about her, so close that Lady Isabel, while unable to stifle a motherly regret for the wedding that might have been, thanked heaven that Christian had not "really cared";

so close that even Judith said that, since Christian had not been hit too hard, though she regretted the *coup manqué*, she personally found some consolation in the fact that she would not be called upon to make apologies for the political aberrations of her brother-in-law.

The polling day came, and passed with but little excitement.

"You wouldn't har'ly know it," said a voter, who had returned to his normal avocations after a morning wasted, as he considered, in the task of recording his vote. "There was a few men drunk in the town. Which won is it? Bedad, they dunno yet. Father Sweeny it was marched in the Pribawn boys. Faith, he had them well regulated. Very nate they marched, very nate entirely. They never were in such rotation!"

The voter bent melancholy and slightly bloodshot eyes upon Christian, and awaited her reply.

Christian, with her usual miscellaneous company of dogs, was on her way to visit a woman whose husband had died not long before. Her way took her along the banks of the Broadwater, and during one of the frequent pauses, necessitated by the investigations into the private affairs of water-rats and others, made by her companions, she and Peter Callaghan had exchanged greetings. He and Christian had fallen into talk, with the absence of formality that is, perhaps, peculiar to intercourse between his class and hers. He leant upon his scythe, and discoursed seriously and courteously. He wore a soft, slouched black hat, that did not wholly conceal his thick and curly hair, in which there was scarcely a grey strand, though he was, as he told Christian, the one age with her father. His white flannel jacket was wrapped round him, its skirts pushed under the band of his brown frieze trousers. A red wisp of rag was knotted round his middle, and held all together. His pale grey and wistful eyes looked at Christian from above a tangled thicket of grizzled moustache and beard. He suggested almost equally, a conventional Saint Joseph and a

stage-brigand—a brigand, as it might be, who had joined the Salvation Army. "As old as I am," he returned, dreamily, to the affair of the morning, "I stepped it away with them!"

He turned his eyes from Christian's face to the large and sliding brightness of the river.

There followed a moment of silence that was filled by the yelps of the little dogs who had marked a water-rat to ground, and the hobble-de-hoy shouts of the hound puppies, uttered with no definite idea of the cause of their enthusiasm, but none the less enthusiastic for that reason.

"Are you the youngest young lady, I beg your pardon?" Peter Callaghan asked presently. "It's long since I seen you. Your father knows me well. I remember of one time when the hounds was crossing my land, and I seen yourself and your sisther taking the hur'ls. I cries out to ye 'me heart'd rise at ye, my darlins!' and the Major, he laughs!"

"I remember jumping the hurdles," said Christian; "I'll tell my father I met you."

"He gave me permission to cut the 'looha' in these fields," resumed Peter Callaghan. "I'm thankful to him. I have a good sop of it cut."

He waved a hand; Christian saw, at a little distance, a heap of rushes, and, seated on it, a girl, of whose presence she had been unaware. She was very pale, and there was a fixity of sadness about her. Christian spoke to her, but she did not appear to notice.

"She's my daughter," said Peter Callaghan in his quiet voice. "She wouldn't know it was to her you spoke. She's dark, the creature. Blinded she is. She's not long that way."

"How did it happen?" said Christian, in a low voice.

"You could not say," said Peter Callaghan; his dreamy eyes roved again over the broad river; "God left a hand on her," he said.

Christian went on her way, and the words stayed with her. "God left a hand on her." There had been no resent-

ment in the father's voice, only a profound and noble gravity.

"And here am I," thought Christian, "angry and whimpering——"

Mrs. James Barry lived a mile or so farther down the river. Christian gathered up her pack of terriers, hound puppies, and red setters, with the farm collie to complete its absurdity, and walked fast. October was just ending; the willows along the river-bank were yellow, the reeds in the ditches that ran beneath each fence were greying and withering. The successive profiles of wood and hill, down the valley of the river went from orange and brown to a reddish purple, until, in the large serenity of the autumn evening, they softened to the universal blue of distance.

Mrs. Barry's farm-house stood a little back from the river. A stream that widened to a pond, and narrowed again to a stream, divided the house from the fields that ran between it and the river; the decent thatched roofs and whitewashed walls of the farm, and the elm trees that grew beside it, were mirrored in the pond. A flotilla of geese and ducks paraded, in stately fatuity, to and fro across the mirror. A battered little wooden bridge, painted green, enabled the people of the farm to reach the banks of the river. Christian crossed it, and went up to the open door of the house.

In the kitchen a red-haired woman was seated, rocking a wooden cradle with her foot while she stitched at a child's frock. Hens, with their alert and affected reserve of manner, stepped in and out of the doorway, sometimes slowly, with poised claw, sometimes headlong, with greedy speed. Christian watched them and the hound puppies (in whose power of resistance to temptation she had no confidence), while she talked to the woman of the house, and heard the story of her trouble.

Her husband had been "above in the hospital at Riverstown. He was in it with a fortnight," said the red-haired woman in the idiom of her district, the noise of the rocker of the cradle on the earthen floor beating through her words; "he had a bunch, like, undher his chin, and they were to

cut it." She paused, and the wooden bump of the cradle filled the pause.

"When they had it cut, he rose up on the table, and all his blood went from him; only one little tint, I suppose, stopped in him. Afther a while, the nurse seen the life creeping back in him. 'We have him yet!' says she to the Docthor. 'I thought he was gone from us!' says the Docthor." The voice ceased again. The speaker slashed the frock in her hand at an over-bold hen, who had skipped on to the table beside her and was pecking hard and sharp at some food on a plate.

"They sent him home then. We thought he was cured entirely. He pulled out the summer, but he had that langersome way with him through all."

She was silent a moment, then she looked at Christian, with grief, crowned and omnipotent, on her tragic brow.

"As long as he was alive, I had courage in spite of all, but when I thinks now of them days, and the courage I had, it goes through me!" Her red-brown eyes stared through the open door at the path twisting across the field to the high road.

"Ye'll never see him on that road again, and when I looks up it me heart gets dark. Sure, now when he's gone, I thinks often, if he'd be lyin' par'lysed above in the bed, I'd be runnin' about happy!"

When Christian went home Mrs. Barry walked with her to the little green bridge, and stood there until her visitor reached the bend of the river where the path passed from her sight.

At the turning Christian looked back and saw the lonely figure standing at the bridge-head, and again she said to herself: "Here am I, angry and whimpering!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

Doctor Mangan told himself that he had never laid out a ten-pound note to better advantage than the one he had pushed into the heel of Tishy's fist. It had, as he thought it would, clinched the matter. He had never been unaware of the menace of Cloherty, R.A.M.C., but he was confident in the three forces that he had at his command—authority, bribery, and propinquity.

"If I know my young lady," he said cheerfully to himself, "she'll think more of Larry at her elbow, than of that foxy devil back at Riverstown" (which was the present scene of Captain Cloherty's professional labours). "And what's more, if Tishy will only give her mind to it, it'll take a stiffer lad than Master Larry to be man enough for her! She downed him once, and she'll do it again, in spite of Christian Lowry!"

Even as the Big Doctor thought, there were many more that fought for him in this matter than against him. Potent had been his suggestion to his daughter that there wasn't a girl in Cluhir that wouldn't "be gibeing at her" if she lost so golden an opportunity, nor one that would believe she had not half hanged herself to secure it. (And though it has not been possible to include them in this chronicle, it may be accepted that there were many girls in Cluhir of the lively malevolence of whose gibes Tishy was entirely sensible.) Even more potent was the pull of Larry's position, the *prestige* of his money, of his "place," of his good looks; most potent of all, the fact of his nearness, the mere primary fact that he was a young man, in whose company she was daily thrown, whose unattached status (the Doctor had kept his own counsel as to that interview with Christian,

and his deductions therefrom) was a continual challenge to her charms, whose mere presence was an excitement and a stimulus.

As the polling day approached, and effort became more strenuous, Larry fell ever more gratefully into the habit of No. 6, The Mall. Of coming in, in the gloom of the wet afternoon, and finding Tishy mending her gloves, or stitching something all lace and ribbons, something that would obviously blossom into a "Sunday blouse," but that, with a flash of her grey eyes, she would tell him was "poor-clothes," that the Nuns had asked her to make. Of sitting on the big sofa beside her, and teasing her about Captain Cloherty, and the adventure in which Tinker took a leading part.

"If you go telling tales to the Doctor, you'll be sorry!"

"How can you make me sorry?"

"Wait awhile and you'll find out! There are plenty ways to teach little boys manners! Oh, look now what you've done! You've made me pull the thread out o' me needle. Thread it now, you!"

Then Larry, with his quick eye and steady hand, would annoy her by threading it as deftly as she herself could have done, would possibly contribute some enormous stitches to the confection, and, by the time its construction was seriously resumed, the collaborators on the big sofa would have advanced a stage further on the road through the jungle, that had, with so much foresight and patience, been prepared for them.

Young Mr. Coppinger's hopes and fears as to his prospects of becoming a Member of Parliament varied no more than was suitable in the possessor of the artistic temperament, but Barty, his agent in chief, maintained an attitude of unbroken pessimism. That whisper of the secret and late-declared antagonism of the Church had reached him, and in the secure seclusion of his own office he inveighed against clerical interference with all the fierceness of a dog chained in his kennel, who knows that his adversaries are as unable to touch him as he is to injure them. Only, in Barty's case,

he was quite sure that his barkings were unheard, and he would have been exceedingly alarmed had he thought otherwise.

"I declare to God I don't care what way it goes!" Larry had said many times, but most often when fatigue and discouragement had together taken control.

Such times had come more often during the last week before the election, and they reached their climax on the evening of the polling day. The two young men, mentally and physically demoralised by fatigue, had at length, at an hour considerably past midnight, escaped from their colleagues, and, having gained the sanctuary of Barty's office, were drearily reviewing the position by the light of a smoky lamp and over the ashes of a dead fire; counting possible votes, making unconvincing calculations based on supposition, wading hand-in-hand ever deeper into the Slough of Despond.

"I was talking to your father this evening," said Larry, lighting a cigarette and letting himself fall into an ancient rocking-chair. "He wouldn't give me an opinion one way or the other, but it's my belief he thinks it's a bad chance."

"I believe he's done his best for you," said Barty, dubiously; "but the way he's situated, he doesn't like to come out too strong one way or the other."

"Quite right too; I'm a rotten proposition," said Larry, "and this dam' cigarette won't draw!"

"I could stand getting licked," went on Barty, too preoccupied to consider the plaints of his principal, "if I thought the Clergy had played fair. Father Hogan and Father Sweeney stood to us well, and I know Father Greer was for you at the first go-off; but God knows what way he and the rest o' them went, after. I wouldn't trust them——" His dark and mournful eyes rested dejectedly upon Larry. "And what's more, they don't trust you!"

"They're perfectly right," said Larry; "shows their sense! You and I are what Father Greer and the rest of them would consider rotten bad Catholics, and I believe they

know it!" He got up from the limping old rocking-chair, and stretched himself, with a yawn that prolonged itself into a howl. "Oh Dark Rosaleen!—or Kathleen-ni-Houlihan—or anything else you like to call yourself—if you only knew how really and sincerely devoted I am to you! I believe I'm a perfectly single-minded Irish patriot, and yet you won't believe in me, and no more will any one else, except this bloody old fool of a Barty here! Barty my hearty, I'm going to bed! I'm done! Don't wake me till the news comes in——" He gave vent to another heart-broken yawn.

"Well, for God's sake stop howling like a banshee, and go!" replied the hard-pressed Barty, "I'm about done myself!"

The opening Meet of the Broadwater Vale Hounds chanced to take place at Cluhir Bridge, on the day after the election. Larry, finishing a late breakfast at Hallinan's Hotel, heard the beloved sounds of the hunt, the pistol-cracks of the whips, the clatter of horse-hoofs, the jingle of bits, and the steady paddling of hounds' feet in the muddy street. Joined with these was the clamour of the town curs and the thunder of the following rush of town boys along Cluhir's narrow pavements. Larry ran to the window, and opening it, found himself practically face to face with young Georgy Talbot-Lowry, riding a horse of Bill Kirby's.

The sight of the hounds drove from his mind the resolve to have no dealings more with the house of Talbot-Lowry.

"Hullo, Georgy!" he shouted: "I didn't know you were home——"

Georgy gave a quick look at the window, and directed his gaze between his horse's ears; save that his face had turned as red as his coat, there was nothing, as he jogged on, to indicate that he had either seen or heard.

Larry banged down the window, in a state of conflagration, every strained nerve vibrating. What need to attempt to recount what he said or thought? Dark Rosaleen has made trouble often enough between nearer and dearer than

Larry and his young cousin. She will send brothers to fight each other to the changing music of her harp, crowned and uncrowned; she will gather her sons under the sign of the Cross, and encourage them to hate one another for the love of God. This was only a trivial bit of mischief hardly worthy of our attention, were it not that it had its share in the macadamising of that jungle road in which, as is frequent in such routes, the preliminary labour had been undertaken by an elephant, under the direction of a skilful mahout.

It was dark when the news came to Cluhir, six o'clock of a wet night. The counting of the votes had taken place elsewhere, and the word was to come by wire. Barty and Larry, with others of the rival "Commy-tees," had hung about between the post-office, and their respective offices, and houses of call, all day. Many drinks had been drunk, many bets been laid; before the news came through, Larry's proclaimed indifference as to the result had worn so thin as to be imperceptible. It seemed to him, during the tedious hours of that dark and wet afternoon, that success in this enterprise was the only thing left in life worth having. To triumph, secretly, over that secret clerical opposition, to snap his fingers, openly, at Georgy Talbot-Lowry's impudence and all that it implied of hostility and contempt. These were the great objects of life, the things that justified all the double dealing, and the lies, and the humbug of the past weeks. There was no such thing as patriotism, and ideals were rot. He had claimed last night to be a single-minded patriot, but to-day he knew better; he had become a man, and had put ideals away, with love, and other childish things. The main thing was to have your desire of your enemy.

He was standing in the heavy downpour on the outskirts of the group that waited outside the post-office; he was sick with suspense and fatigue, and hardly troubled to move as a motor came slowly nosing its way through the crowd. It passed within a few inches of him and stopped. He heard the Big Doctor's voice.

"Get into the car out of the rain," it commanded. "D'ye want to be ill on my hands again? I'll run you down to No. 6. Let Barty 'phone the news to you. Isn't that what he's for?"

Larry was alone in the dining-room of No. 6 when the telephone summoned him. He had eaten nothing since breakfast; his hand shook with cold and excitement, and he could scarcely hold the switch firmly.

"Burke, 1047; Coppinger, 705;" Barty's voice sounded flat and without emotion. "Majority against us, 342. Can you hear? Adverse majority, 342! They've beaten us to babby-rags!" The voice ceased.

Larry said: "All right, old chap. Thanks!" and hung up the receiver.

He returned to the dirty, comfortable old sofa by the fire.

Beaten! and Larry was used to victory. In all his twenty-five years of life, he had never been thwarted. What he wished to do, that he did, in games, in sport, in art. He might have said, with Beatrice: "There was a star danced, and under that was I born!"

The first defeat he could remember was the one he had suffered at Christian's hands, and here he was, turned down again, twice in a month!

"My luck's out!" he said, staring at the flickering, whispering fire, and feeling that ebbing of life which will befall, even at five and twenty, when exhaustion, that has been held at bay by excitement and hope, comes to its own.

The door burst open, and Tishy came swiftly into the room.

"I've just heard!" she said. "Dad got it on the other 'phone. It's a wicked shame and a disgrace! That's what it is!" Her voice was hot with wrath and sympathy; she flung across the room and caught Larry's hand and shook it vehemently. "The fools!" she cried, furiously. "You were too good for them, that's what it was! The dirty, low, common—Oh, there's no words bad enough for them!" Her eyes blazed; she looked exceedingly handsome. She

was moved by a perfectly genuine emotion of indignation; Larry was Mangan property, and it was not fitting that the leading family of Cluhir should be defeated.

"You look half dead this minute!" she cried, pushing him down on to the sofa by the hand that she had taken. "Sit down for gracious sake!"

Again the door opened, and from without the Doctor's deep voice said:

"Tishy! Come here a minute, I want you."

Larry, sitting on the sofa, watching his wet boots steaming, was conscious of a sense of consolation. It was something to know that these kind people cared. He heard the light chink of glasses, and looked round, and saw Tishy coming into the room, bearing a tray, on which were a cake, and wineglasses, and a bottle of champagne.

"Dad says he prescribes a little stimulant!" said Tishy, gaily, "the wire's cut——"

She took the cork out of the bottle with a strong, capable hand, and filled two glasses. "Drink that at once now! And I'll drink one drop myself—just for luck! Here now! Here's to the next time, and you at the top of the poll!"

"Sounds as if I were a bear!" said Larry, with a pale smile at her, as he lifted the glass, "Clink!" He touched her glass, and then drank the wine thirstily.

"I was just about cooked," he said apologetically. "Awfully good of you and the Doctor——"

"Ah, don't be talking nonsense!" interrupted Tishy. "Here, show me your glass——"

The glasses were very large and old fashioned; she refilled his, brimmingly. "Now, sit down, and drink that, and eat a bit of cake. Not a word out of you now! Only do as you're told!"

Then, as he obeyed her, she suddenly knelt beside him, and before he realised what she was doing she began to unlace his boots. Larry started up, horrified and protesting.

"Sit down at once and be good!" said Tishy, holding firmly to the foot on which she had begun operations, and

with a vigorous jerk compelling him to obedience. "I'll do what I choose, I always do!"

Her nimble, white fingers made short work of the task that she had set herself; Larry's remonstrances availed him nothing. She had insisted on refilling his glass a third time, and the wine had begun to take away from him the feeling of reality, and to make everything seem hazy and indefinite, but quite agreeable.

"There now!" said Tishy, pushing the boots under the sofa, "aren't you obliged to me? I often did that for the Doctor, but I never saw such lovely green silk socks on *him,* I can tell you!"

The champagne had made her eyes very bright; there was a look in them that spoke to a dim memory in Larry's cloudy mind. She was still kneeling beside him, and as she prepared to rise, she rested one hand on his knee to help herself. Larry put his hand on hers, and leaned forward. Her brilliant, challenging face was very near his. His memory cleared in a flash, and he thought of the night, long ago, when they had played at forfeits.

"'My shoe buckle or my lips'? Do you remember?" he said, with an unsteady laugh, answering the challenge. "It's my turn now—which will you have?"

He did not wait for an answer, but looking straight into her eyes, he bent down and kissed her laughing, red lips.

The situation had not materially changed when Dr. Mangan's large presence was suddenly developed at the end of the sofa. He had come noiselessly in, and was surveying his daughter and guest with a benedictory smile.

"So that's the way, is it?" he said quietly.

The hot dream that held Larry, melted and reeled a little. He released Tishy from his enfolding arms, and wondered if he had better risk standing up. He wished old Mangan hadn't come bothering in. He had only just begun to find out how much he liked Tishy.

But he stood up, and met the Doctor's smile with a guilty and foolish grin, holding on with one hand to the end of the

sofa. Tishy continued to hold his other hand; he felt as if he should fall if she relinquished it.

"Well, I suppose I may draw my own conclusions from what I see?" went on the Big Doctor, in a voice that oozed fatherliness at every syllable. "Eh, Larry?"

Larry swayed a little; his yellow hair was ruffled, his blue eyes shone, he looked like a child who had just been awakened.

"Oh quite so, sir," he said, laughing. "Apparently it's the only thing to do!" which was indisputable.

The bottle of champagne which had played its part so ably was finished later on, and the engagement was ratified and celebrated with the pomp that was its due.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Miss Letitia Mangan was a young woman of dauntless courage, who, as has been said of the sect spoken of by detractors as The Black Prozbytarians, feared neither God nor divil. To this rule there were, however, in Tishy's case, two exceptions admitted, and of these, one was her father, the other Father Greer. If, therefore, during the days that followed, when the streets of Cluhir were, as it were, mined with congratulations that exploded round her wherever and whenever she went abroad, any shade of doubt, any tenuous memory of the foxy devil back in Riverstown assailed her, she made haste to banish such with the thoughts of Father Greer's pontifical approval, and of the warmth of the paternal sunshine that now shone upon her and her *fiancé*.

Cluhir said that it was a very nice engagement, and a great match; there were not wanting those who said also that it was wonderful promotion for that Tishy Mangan. A tactless ex-charwoman had even referred to young Mr. Coppinger as being Miss Mangan's "up-raiser," and having enquired, with incredulity, of Mrs. Mangan ("and this before a crowd in Egan's shop, if you please!" as Mrs. Mangan reported) "Ma'am! are they in bonds?" she had so fervently thanked God on hearing that such was the case, that Mrs. Mangan said she could never enter Egan's again without she'd feel they were all laughing at her!

Of the *fiancé* and of his frame of mind, what shall be said? He, at all events, said as little to himself as was possible, but, in the circumstances, it was no more than could be expected that a lively fancy would not wholly be denied,

and that occasional vagrant visions would present themselves uninvited. He pictured to himself a meeting with Christian, all in the clouds, of course; he told himself he had no wish to meet her, nor, if he did, was he at all likely to discuss the matter with her; still he thought that he would rather enjoy telling her that he had acknowledged his engagement with Tishy, to Tishy's father, in the very same words in which she, Christian, had broken hers with him. They had somehow stuck in his head. He would tell her that. He had certainly been rather screwed (but that there would be no necessity to mention); it was just a curious chance that he should have used them. He dramatised the interview in his mind. It would serve Christian right; it would be a rather jolly instance of retributive justice—only he wished that the Christian whom he visualised was not always that shadowed, ethereal Christian whom he had painted, with, as Rossetti said, the wonder not yet quite gone from that still look of hers. Bother Rossetti, anyway! What did it matter what he said? The main point was what Larry himself had said, and the result was that he was engaged to Tishy Mangan, solidly and seriously.

There was nothing fatiguingly ethereal about Tishy anyhow; she was just about as good-looking a girl as he had ever met in his life. He would take her to Paris some day, and would see what his pals would say to her. He thought there wouldn't be two opinions about her there. He and she would travel about a bit. He didn't feel as if he would care about settling down at Coppinger's Court at once. Anyhow he would have to fix up about Aunt Freddy. She hadn't written him much of a letter about his engagement; she seemed to like it just about as well as she had liked his excursion into politics.

"Of course Tishy's a Papist!" he thought, mockingly, accounting to himself for the chill of the congratulations. "That's enough for Aunt Freddy! But, hang it all, so am I! She ought to see how suitable it is! I'd like to lay on Father Greer to talk to her!"

There is no need to attempt to record in detail the comments of the wider circle of Larry's acquaintances, but it may be said that his friends of all ranks had one point in common, a sincere admiration for Dr. Mangan. Bill Kirby, who had supported him politically, now fell away from him. Judith had not refrained from admitting him to the secret which she had extracted from her younger sister, and Bill's references to young Mr. Coppinger and to Doctor, Mrs., and Miss Mangan, would have been very helpful to those ladies, of whom there were many, who took the matter to heart.

The unpopularity of the engagement was considerably aggravated by the extreme magnificence of the furs, presented by the bridegroom elect to his *fiancée,* and worn by her at a meet of the hounds, which she attended in her father's motor.

It might have been some consolation to the neighbourhood had it known that those grey furs had been of the nature of a peace-offering, after a rather acute difference of opinion on that point of settling down at Coppinger's Court as opposed to going abroad. Larry had shelved it for the present, and had, as he told himself, made good by the dint of the furs. That had come out all right, but now, Larry, mounted on Joker, and led in chains at Tishy's motor-wheel, found that among his former allies of the hunt things were not as they once had been, and was not pleased. Singularly enough, Judith alone was faithful found among the faithless. She declared that Larry had been brutally and idiotically treated, and that this engagement was the result, and justified all that she had been saying for many past ages. When Larry appeared at the Meet, his scalp-lock prominent among Miss Mangan's furs, Judith alone of his former intimates met him with cordiality, condoled with him over his election defeat with sympathy, and congratulated him on his engagement with decorum.

"I felt it was only decent," she said later, to the friend to whom she complacently recounted her effort, "after he had been kicked downstairs by Papa, and booted out of the

house by Christian, quite without justification. I congratulated him warmly! I absolutely rode up to the gorgeous Tishy and said civil things there too!"

"It was perfectly angelic of you!" said the friend.

"Quite the reverse, my dear!" said Judith, proudly. "But you see Bill has the hounds, and anyhow, I like to prepare for all contingencies!"

For the rest, a chilly neutrality reigned at the Meet. Larry was finding his official position of captive decidedly irksome. He wished that Tishy would not call him by his name every time she spoke to him; that she would not speak so loud; that this eternal jog to the covert would end before the Day of Judgment; finally, that he had stayed at home. He saw the red-headed Cloherty, and, failing more congenial society, joined him. But the red-headed Cloherty was crosser than any of them, and what the devil was it to him what Larry's politics or his matrimonial intentions were? Confound Cloherty, anyway! He was a sufficiently common object of the Cluhir scene—and infernally common at that. Hardly a day that you didn't meet him loafing about the town. Larry hadn't the smallest wish to talk to Cloherty. When, some brief time before the Day of Judgment, they reached the covert, it was drawn blank, and Bill Kirby took quite a month to get the hounds out. Hunting rabbits, of course. Larry never knew them so out of hand. And then another rotten jog along the road to the next draw. Why on earth couldn't Bill get into the country and let them have a school at least, and get away from these damned motors? He was hoarse from shouting replies to Tishy's airy nothings, all winged with his name, and all, he felt, addressed as much to the public as to him. She looked stunning, of course, and he was glad he had given her those furs, but three miles trying to keep a suspicious fool of a horse up to the elbow of a car roaring along at half speed, was——!

It matters not what Larry thought it was, the point is that Tishy thought it wasn't, and, suddenly realising his

views, turned in one of those instantaneous furies of hers, to the cavalier at the other elbow of the car, who happened to be the red-headed Cloherty.

Larry, neglected, fell back, and presently found himself beside an old friend, Father David Hogan, the priest of Riverstown. It was nearly ten years since the great days of Father David's black mare; she had passed into legend, and Father David, something heavier than he was but no less keen, now followed hounds in more leisurely fashion on the back of the black mare's son, a portly and careful bay cob.

"I'm very pleased to see you out, Mr. Coppinger," Father David began, the kindly little blue eyes twinkling deep in his red face, confirming the assurance imparted by his extensive smile, that his friendship was still unshaken, "You've been missing some nice hunts."

"I've been too hard worked to get out, Father," apologised Larry.

"Ah, otherwise engaged, maybe?" said Father David, with a facetious stress on the word engaged. "I was greatly put out over the election," he continued. "Tell me now, why didn't the Unionists support you? I noticed that our worthy M.F.H. came to record his vote, but your cousin, the late M.F.H., was, as they say, conspicuous by his absence."

"He's quite an invalid now," said Larry shortly.

"Indeed? Indeed? And is that the case? I'm grieved to hear it!" Father David pressed the stout cob nearer to Joker, and murmured very confidentially. "I've known you since your boyhood I may say, Mr. Coppinger, and you will not consider me impertinent speaking to you. But could you tell me is it a fact what I'm hearing about the good Major—you, no doubt, have prior information——"

"I think that's very unlikely," said Larry, sulkily, flushing as he spoke.

Father David eyed Larry cautiously, and began to wonder if something he had been told not long since were true.

In Ireland, it may confidently be said, all things are known to the poor people, and a brief consideration of this position will show, that this being so, there is but little that is unknown to the Church.

"Well, Mr. Coppinger," Father Hogan resumed, "I'm told —only told, mind you—that the Major had Mount Music and the demesne advertised on the English papers——"

"Good God!" exclaimed Larry, startled out of his sulk; "to sell?"

Father David, like other gentlemen of his age and cloth, had the Baboo's predilection for a well-worn quotation. "As to that I cannot say," he said portentously. "'Tis whispered in Heaven, 'tis muttered in Hell' that the encumbrances are very heavy—mortgages and debts——. The good Major had a long family, Mr. Coppinger; fine, dashing young min they are too, but we all know that expenses do not tend to diminish as families grow up! Children may be a heritage that comes from the Lord, but unless other heritages accompany them——!" Father David put his head on one side, and, beaming at Larry, laid his little professional joke, so to speak, at his feet.

"Well, well," he resumed, "'What business is it of yours?' says you!"

"Not at all, Father," said Larry, still shaken by what he had heard. "Thank you for speaking to me—it's the first I've heard of it."

The procession of the hunt halted, the hounds left the road by the direct method of a high stone "gap," and Father David and the bay cob melted away to betake themselves to those secret equivalent routes known to those who have come to years of discretion in the hunting-field.

The second draw seemed at first as if it were to be no more fortunate than its predecessor. The covert was a patch of scrubby woodland at a little distance below the road, at the head of one of the long deep glens that were the terrors of the Broadwater country. The wind blew from the west, across the wide cleft of Gloun Kieraun, and the

hounds were thrown into the wood in which the upper end of the glen was masked, and were encouraged to work downwards. An unaccustomed wave of misanthropy had assailed Larry, and instead of following with the crowd the course of the hounds, he moved onwards along the road scarcely considering where he was going. He was thinking with consternation of what Father Hogan had told him. Larry was not of those who nurse their wrath to keep it warm, and the thought of Dick's misfortunes swept away the recollection of his insults. Joker had, of his own initiative, soon turned aside from the high road into a grassy lane, and he moved along it in the relentless manner in which many horses will decline to stand still while Larry, deep in thought, allowed the reins to lie on the horse's neck while he lit a cigarette and tried to fix in his memory Father David's exact words. He thought he would talk to Dr. Mangan about it. Things might be better than the old priest thought. From the thought of the doctor his mind passed on to that of his wedding. Was it possible that he was to be married next week? A distinct physical drop of the heart accompanied the realisation. "Nerves!" he told himself, and hurried on to reflect upon his bride. She certainly looked stunning in those grey furs; he was glad he had given them to her; she knocked spots off any other girl in the country. He impressed this thought on his mind. And she had sung jolly well last night, and had accompanied him quite decently. They would get on all right once they were married. She had been a bit edgey these last few days, but—some under-self warned him off the pursuit of this topic. He began to formulate excuses for her that inculpated himself. Larry "came of a gentle kind," and had the generous temper that finds it easier to bear than to ascribe blame.

A note of the horn was wafted sweetly across the glen, and he came to the surface of his thoughts. By Jove! Where had Joker got him to? The lane they had wandered down ran parallel with Gloun Kieraun, and a gap in the

fence on his left made him aware that he was now moving abreast with the hunt, but was divided from his fellows by the chasm of the glen.

A second touch of the horn came; Larry checked his horse; Bill Kirby had seen him and was shouting to him.

"Head him back if he breaks your side! I want him this way!"

All jolly fine for old Bill, but where did young Mr. Coppinger come in? He held up his hand to show he had heard, and stood still.

One hound spoke, sharply, in the depths of the woody glen. Another and another joined in. In a moment, the echoing glen was full of voices; it was impossible to tell what was happening. A couple and a half emerged on the farther side in the heather above the trees, working a line upwards, and speaking to it as they went. Larry saw the Master force his horse down near them, and heard him cheering them and doubling his horn. Another couple joined them, and Larry swore heartily. Here he was on the wrong side, and the fox away to the east! The cry redoubled; it sounded as if twice the pack were engaged, yet the two and a half couple were not being reinforced. By some chance Larry withdrew his eyes from them, and just then, about a hundred yards further on, on his side of the glen, something like a brown feather floated up into view.

"A second fox, by the living Jingo!" whispered Larry, thrilling to that sight that never fails to thrill.

He held up his hat. Bill saw the signal, and acknowledged it by redoubled efforts to get the hounds away with the fox that had broken to the east. The chorus of sound grew and grew, and as Joker and his rider, tense with an equal excitement, listened, it became plain that the cry was drawing nearer to them. Joker's sensitive ears were twitching, his heart thumped; the storm of sound was just below them now, and then, hound by hound, Larry counted them as they came, fourteen couples struggled up over the lip of

the glen where that brown feather had so lightly lifted into view, and drove ahead, on the way it had gone, with a rush and a cry that Larry could no more have checked than he could have stemmed and driven back the wild stream in the glen below.

It may be said at once that he made no such futile effort. With a single glance at the frenzied party on the farther side, already galloping distractedly for a possible pass lower down the glen, Larry released his feelings in a maniac howl to the fleeting pack, and let Joker—who had already stood up on his hind legs twice, in legitimate protest—follow them.

The fox, having begun by running west, away from the glen, had then turned right-handed, and was heading north over the mountain whose lower slopes were cleft by Gloun Kieraun. The scent served well; the gurgling music, with now and then a sharper note, like a fife among flutes and 'cellos, flowed on, and Larry and Joker, two happy creatures, the world forgetting (though by no means by their world forgot) galloped and rejoiced.

The little mountain sheep with their black, speckled faces sprang before them, quick as rabbits; green plover flopped up from the grassy places, wheeling and squealing; a woodcock whirred out of a furze bush so near Larry that he could have struck it down with his crop. Long-legged mountain hares fled right and left of the driving pack, unheeded. Great spaces of the mountain were bare of fences, but in those tracts where the grass had mastered the heather, it was "striped" with broad banks, sound, and springy, and bound, as with wire, by the heather roots. To feel Joker quicken his big stride and leap at the banks out of his gallop, to realise the perfect precision of his method, as he changed feet and flicked off into the next field, to race him at the walls of smooth round stones, weathered in the long centuries, and grey with lichen, and to know that if they were three times their height Joker would have sailed over them with the same ease—whatever might have been Larry's

burden of care, it would have fallen from him, forgotten, in the pure glory of that ride.

The hounds ran hard for nearly a half hour before they checked, and Larry bethought him of those unfortunates between whom and himself that great gulf had been fixed. Apparently they had not found, any more than the rich man in the parable, a means of crossing it. He was high above the valley; the splendid landscape lay in broad undulating ribbons of brown and green and amethyst and blue, with the Broadwater dividing it—a silver belt, with a band of green on its either side; but within the great circle that was spread beneath his eyes were none of those toiling specks that tell of a Hunt in labour. The check was brief; the hurrying hounds, busy as ants, cast themselves right and left forward, combining in fussy groups, that would suddenly disintegrate as if by an access of centrifugal force; crowding each other jealously along the top of a bank, flopping into the patches of bog, snuffing greedily at the orange stems of the bracken. Soon, reiterated squeals from a leading lady told that the clue was found again, and they began to run, hard as before, but downwards this time, as though the fox despaired of finding refuge among the high places of heather and rock. Larry had lost his bearings; his eyes on the hounds, his thoughts on his horse, he had not even tried to place himself. But as the hounds ran on, south and west, he began to recognise familiar features. Away there to the south, surely were the trees of Coppinger's Court; could it be the Mount Music earths for which the fox was heading? The hounds were running now down hill, through crisp, upland meadows. Farmhouses began to reappear, thatched and whitewashed, tucked snugly in among low bunches of trees; fences were changing in character; the amber streams ran less fiercely, and found time to loiter in pools and quiet reaches. The hounds had begun to hunt more slowly, and Larry looked at his watch.

"Forty-five minutes since they left the glen! Bill's just

about mad enough for the asylum by this time!" he thought. "If we could only catch this lad!"

But this particular "lad" was not to gratify young Mr. Coppinger by dying, classically, in the open, "on the top of the ground." Five minutes after Larry had taken the time he took it again, this time at the mouth of one of many holes in a sandpit, wherein, as was announced by a country-boy, "the lad" had saved himself, with "the dogs snapping at his tail."

"He earned it well," said Larry, ungrudgingly, even though the mask that was to have hung so carelessly from his saddle was panting deep and safe in the sandpit, listening warily for a possible eviction notice from the hunt-terrier (left, alas, hunting rabbits in the heart of Gloun Kieraun) thanking its own wits for the recollection of the city of refuge.

"Ye're on the lands of Finnahy now," said the boy. "Folly on that way down, and ye'll meet the road. That's the near way."

"Come on, you, and show it to me," said Larry.

Amazing were the ramifications of the near way. The bed of a stream had a share, and a well-trodden path along the wide top of a bank; a brace of wheels had to be trundled out of one gap, a toothless harrow dragged from another. Then they were on heather again.

"Carry on now," said the guide, "and ye'll meet a pat——"

Larry needed no more leading; he was on the hill above Mount Music, Cnocán an Ceoil Sidhe, and the "pat" that was to meet him was the narrow track that led by the Druid Stone and the Well of the Fairies.

The December afternoon was darkening to its close; the sun had made its farewell appearance, coming forth for a moment, a half-circle of clear flame, above the long grey cloud that barred the head of the valley. Larry rode past the great grey stone, and hardly turned his eyes toward it. The hounds, trooping meekly round his horse, went aside to the well, and drank long and thirstily. He did not wait

for them. He put from his mind the memory of the last time he had seen from that hill-side the sun go down. Rather he set his thoughts, resolutely, on that other last time, in the library of Mount Music. And he called up Tishy's brilliant face, framed in the furs that he had given her, that it might help him to drive away other memories. He was very fond of Tishy, he told himself; anyway, he was booked to marry her next week.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE small town of Cluhir, ever avid, as are all small towns, of sensation, was, did it only know it, about to enjoy a week that would long be remembered in its history. Miss Mangan's marriage, which alone would have made an epoch, was fixed for Thursday, December 12th; but this, it need scarcely be said, was a matter that, though soul-stirring, was devoid of the element of surprise. Not so, however, was the sudden evacuation of Mount Music. Father Hogan's indefinite information was as much as was generally known, but much that was not generally known was confided to the discreet ears of Father Greer, and he, almost alone of the inhabitants of Cluhir, was not surprised when the news went abroad that the Mount Music carriage had conveyed Major Dick and Lady Isabel to the station, and that so vast a mass of luggage had accompanied them as to betoken a prolonged absence.

That the news should, in the first instance, have been communicated to Father Greer by Dr. Mangan, was not remarkable, since Dr. Mangan's professional advice had usefully reinforced his unofficial advocacy of the move, and Father Greer was rarely ignorant for long of matters that were found interesting by the Big Doctor.

Not merely for the sake of Major Talbot-Lowry's health had this upheaval taken place; an even more imperious factor had been the state of the family finances. The cloud of debt that had so long brooded over Mount Music was lower and darker than ever it had been before. Dick had at length been coerced into opening negotiations for the sale of his property to his tenants, but although, in the full-

ness of time, these might be expected to bear fruit, they were of no more immediate assistance to this over-weighted survivor of a prehistoric species, than is the suggestion to a horse to live in order that he may get oats.

There was pressure in the air over Mount Music. Tradesmen, whose suffering had been as long as their bills, began to turn, in what had seemed like the sleep of exhaustion, and to talk about solicitors' letters. Even Dr. Mangan had surprised and pained his friend, the Major, by forgetting his wonted delicate reticence, and hinting, with what struck Dick as singularly doubtful taste, at a repayment of those loans that he had volunteered, offering as an excuse for doing so the expenses consequent on his daughter's marriage. In addition to these irritations, Major Talbot-Lowry had received what he justly considered to be very annoying letters from a firm of Dublin solicitors, in connection with various charges and mortgages on the Mount Music property, which so they informed him, had been "acquired" by them for "a client," and were now to be called in. Alternatively, it was suggested, an arrangement might be proposed, whereby the house and demesne of Mount Music might be accepted in settlement of the sums in question. The firm had been in communication with another creditor, Dr. Mangan of Cluhir, and it was hoped that all Major Talbot-Lowry's liabilities might be arranged for by the method they suggested.

Dick Talbot-Lowry received this announcement with the mixture of indignation and contempt that might have been anticipated from an old-established Pterodactyl, who has been warned that his hereditary wallow in the Primeval Ooze is about to be wrested from him. Having expressed these sentiments in suitable language, he said, lightly, that Fairfax must raise as much on the property as would keep these Dublin sharks quiet, and in the meantime he would shut up the house at once and go to London. Temporary retrenchment was all that was required. He would let the place. Some rich Englishman would jump at the chance——

Major Dick had that optimism about his own affairs that is often combined with a tranquil pessimism about the affairs of others. He said that all he wanted was to get clear of the blood-sucking swarm of hangers-on that infested the place. He wondered at his own folly in having endured them for so long. And it would do Christian good to get away. She had been looking rather pulled down—she missed the hunting, of course. London would do her good—would be a change.

This, approximately, was what Dick said. What Lady Isabel said, being an attenuated echo of Dick's observations, is negligible. What Christian said was known only to Rinka, the eldest of the fox terriers, who had a habit of sitting in the chair at which Christian knelt to say her prayers, and would then, with her bland and balmy smile, extort confidences denied to any other living creature.

On Christian fell the brunt of the arrangements, the decisions, worst of all, the dismissals. The house (pending the materialisation of the Rich Englishman) was to be shut up, so also were all external departments, with their workers, most of whom Christian had known from her childhood; it was her hand that had to cut the knot of these old friendships. Her father and mother had preceded her, and she was left, alone in the big, old house, with old Evans, and his down-trodden old wife, to be her ministers, with Rinka to be her companion, and with the obliteration of her past life to be her task.

An immense fire of logs and turf blazed in the hall fireplace, a funeral pyre, on which Christian cast one basketful after another of letters, papers, ball-cards, hunt cards, pamphlets, old school-room books, stray numbers of magazines, all the accumulated rubbish that life, like the leader in a paper-chase, strews in its trail; all valueless, yet all steeped in the precious scent of past happiness, of good times that were over and done with. She spent those short, dark days in desolation and destruction, and Rinka trotted after her, up and downstairs, in and out of the shuttered bed-

rooms, and the gaunt, curtainless, carpetless rooms downstairs, wondering what it all portended, vowing, in her little faithful, cunning heart, not to let Christian out of her sight for a single instant.

The darkness and shortness of the days was intensified by the onslaught of a great storm; one of those giant overwhelmings when it seems that the canopy of heaven is being crushed down upon one's own little corner of this earth, and that all the winds and all the waters of the universe are gathered beneath it to annihilate one insignificant segment of the world. On Monday morning, Christian saw her father and mother start, too agitated by their coming journey to have a spare thought for sentiment; too much beset by the fear of what they might lose, their keys, their sandwiches, their dressing-boxes, to shed a tear for what they were losing, and had lost. And on Monday afternoon with the early darkness the storm began. There came first a little run of wind round the house, like a cavalry patrol spying out the land. There followed complete stillness; then a few scattered drops of rain fell, and ceased; and then, with a heavy, travelling roar, the wind came rushing up the valley. It thundered in the cavernous chimneys of Mount Music; it bawled and whooped at the windows, and shook them with a human fury, as though it were life or death to it to get in, as though it were maddened by the failure of its surprise attack. Christian and her ancient servitors ran from room to room, barring shutters, fastening doors, the draughts down the long passages snatching at the candle flames, the old man and woman full of forebodings and of reminiscences of former storms, that came to Christian in broken scraps, through the rattle of windows and the shaking clatter of doors within the house, and the shrieking rage of the wind outside. She sat up late, sorting and arranging things in her room. She had none of the fears that might, for another, have filled the empty house with visitants from another world, and might have taught her to listen for footsteps in the echoing passages and knocks on

the shaking doors. She had always lived on the borderland, and was naturalised in both spheres, but to-night, the voices that had so often given her help, were, when she most needed help, silent.

"I have nothing left now," she said to herself, "but memories, hungering memories——"

She was to leave Mount Music on Wednesday, and on Thursday, Larry was to be married to Tishy Mangan. What room was there for phantom fears when these things were certainties? What spectre from the other world has power to break a heart?

Deep in the night there was a lull, a strange moment of arrest, that endured for scarcely as long as that one could count ten, and then, with the returning tempest, the rain that had been pent behind it, was hurled upon the world. All that night, and all the following day, the rain was like a wall about the house. It was flung in masses against the windows, as buckets of water are flung on a deck. To look forth was as though one looked through a dense sheet of moving ice. Gutters, eave-shoots, tanks, overflowed. The sorely-tried roof was mastered, and in all its angles and valleys yielded entrance to the enemy. Up in the top story hurrying drips beat, like metronomes, all the *tempi,* from a ponderous *adagio* to a racing *prestissimo.* Buckets and jugs and baths filled, and were emptied, and filled again, the old Evans pair waddling to and fro, elated, almost gratified, by the magnitude of their task. And in the middle of the uproar, late in the afternoon, a new sound joined in the chorus of the storm, the coarse and ugly summons of a motor-horn. Old Evans spied at the car through the hall window, and contrived to signal a command to go round to the back of the house.

"If I let dhraw the bolts," he said to Barty Mangan at the kitchen entrance, "the door would fall flat on me!"

"I wouldn't be surprised at all," Barty replied. "Hardly I could force the car into the storm."

Christian was sitting on the floor by the fireplace in the

hall, in the last of the daylight, examining and burning the contents of a drawer full of miscellaneous papers, as the visitor made his unexpected entrance from the back, and Barty, recognising his own improbability and unsuitability on such a day and at such a time, fell to confused apologies that were as incoherent, and seemed as unlikely ever to end, as the buzzing of an imprisoned bee on the window-pane. The fact at length, however, emerged, that there was a map of the Mount Music estate hanging in the library, and that the Major having promised to lend it to Dr. Mangan, had forgotten to do so.

"Some question of boundaries—a little grazing form m' fawther has——" Barty said, nervously.

The map was found, was rolled, and wrapped up, and yet Barty sat on. He talked incessantly, feverishly. He talked so fast, in his low voice, that, in the clamour of the storm, Christian could only distinguish an occasional word. She had a nightmare feeling as if a train were roaring through an endless tunnel, and that she and Barty were the sole passengers, and would never see daylight or know quiet again. His long, lean body was hooped into a very low and deep armchair, his thin hands clasped his knees; his immense dark eyes, fixed on Christian's face, gave her the impression that what he was saying was without relation to what he was thinking. In the direful gloom of the hall, with the rain and wind threshing on the half-shuttered windows, and the inconstant light of the burning logs the sole illuminant, his pale face, with the wing of black hair on his forehead, looked like the face of a strayed occupant of another sphere who had resumed such an aspect as he had worn in his coffin.

"Ireland's a queer old place just now, Miss Christian," Barty hurried on. "Everything's changing hands, and everyone's changing sides. You don't know what'll happen next!"

"I wish I were not changing sides too," said Christian, catching at a sentence, in a momentary lull of the roaring

in the chimney. "Sides of the Channel, I mean—I prefer this side!"

"Do you? Do you?" said Barty, intensely. "I'm glad you do! I feel often as if no one cared for this miserable country except for what they could get out of it! At the election it would have sickened you, the bargaining, and the humbugging, and the lies. Larry was the only man that ran straight, and they jockeyed him——"

"I'm sure *you* ran straight," said Christian, with sympathy in her voice. Piercing her weariness and preoccupation was the feeling that he had something to say that lay under this babble of conversation. He was wrapping himself in a cloak of verbiage, but above the cloak his tormented eyes met hers, and the pain in them hurt her.

"Me? Oh, I only ran after Larry. I thought it was a shabby thing of the Unionists not to have supported him——" he stopped abruptly, remembering Major Talbot-Lowry's abstention, remembering also the feud, of which he knew only that he had never wholly divined its origin, between Coppinger's Court and Mount Music. He cursed himself for a fool. He had not meant to talk politics, but what he had come through the storm to say was so difficult. He looked at Christian with agony. Had she minded what he said about the Unionists? He began to talk again, very fast and incoherently.

"Miss Christian, I said awhile ago everything was changing in Ireland. There's big changes coming, even hereabouts, things I couldn't believe would ever happen. I've recently learned a—a fact—a statement that I'm not at liberty to repeat. I was—I may say that I was shocked—but Miss Christian——" the agony in his eyes was in his voice. "Oh! Miss Christian, for God's sake, believe that I knew nothing of it till this day!"

He stood up, steadying himself with a hand on one of the high marble pillars of the mantelpiece.

"Knew nothing of what?" said Christian, thinking she had mistaken what he had said.

"I can't tell you—you'll know soon enough—only I'm just asking you to believe that I had neither part nor lot in it!"

Christian had risen, and was standing up; he came a step nearer.

"I just want you to understand, Miss Christian, that in this world there is no one I regard like you—no one, nor ever was, nor ever will be—but don't mind that, I only want to say that if there is anything in this earthly world that it's in my power to do for you, or that I could help you in anny shape or form, you will be showing the kindness and mercy of God if you will let me do it for you."

He was trembling, and his voice shook, but his nervousness was gone. "The kindness and mercy of God!" he said again. "I would feel it to be that—oh, God! I would!" The tortured spirit in his eyes had given place to another spirit, whose emotion Christian could neither mistake nor respond to, yet its kinship with the immutable fidelity that was in her heart made an appeal that she could not refuse.

"Be sure I will ask you," she said, with the pity that her own heart-loneliness had taught her in her voice. "I can't understand what it is that you think may happen; it seems to me as if——" She broke off, held by the thought that disaster could hardly have another arrow in its quiver for her. "You may be sure if I think you can help me, I will ask you. I know I could rely on you," she said, pushing back her own trouble, meeting his wild eyes with hers, steadfast and compassionate.

"I'm more than thankful—grateful—you've only to speak——" he stumbled and stammered with words that were all inadequate to his feeling. "I won't detain you; I'm taking your time too long as it is—and I'll have a job to get home too, the river's rising every minute, and so is the storm——" He somehow talked himself out of the room.

Christian returned to her work of destruction. The situation in general had not been made easier for her by Barty's

tragic offer of assistance in some mysterious and advancing stress, or by the certainty that she tried to shake, but could not, of what his eyes had said to her.

But Barty, as he drove home through the storm, felt himself to be a new man, consecrate and apart, ennobled by her promise to rely on him, glorified by her look; and thanked God that, when the trouble came, she would remember that he had had neither part nor lot in it.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE storm, and the preparations for the wedding, raged on with almost equal violence, within and without the walls of No. 6, The Mall. From the moment that daylight began on the fateful Wednesday, the day before the wedding, and until it ceased, Mrs. Mangan's face recurred at the window of the dining room, full of protest, primarily against the arbiter of the weather, who had sent so supreme a hindrance to all her preparations, secondarily, against the shops of Cluhir, whose dilatoriness in matters of the highest importance "had her," so she affirmed frequently, "that much distracted, that it would be a comfort and a consolation to her if she were stretched cold in her grave."

At intervals during the feverish day, beings would come rushing through the torrents, like trout in a swirling brook, and would fling themselves and their parcels in through the door that Mrs. Mangan was generally ready to open for them. Frantic messages from bridesmaids about their costumes, belated wedding presents, all the surf and foam that is flung up by the waves of a wedding, broke upon No. 6. The bride elect, pale and preoccupied, ("pale," that is to say, "for Tishy," as one of her compeers observed, "flushed for any one else!") wrote notes, and exhibited presents, and packed clothes, and rode the tempest with a fortitude that was worthy of the Big Doctor's daughter. But even Tishy began to fail as darkness drew in.

"I can't stand this house any more," she said to her mother, "rain or no rain, I'm going out! I didn't see Mrs. Whelply about Kathleen's wreath that she wrote about——"

"You'll be drowned," said Mrs. Mangan, doomfully; "and sure if Larry comes over, what'll I say to him?"

"*He'll* not come!" said Tishy, scornfully. "What a fool he is, a day like this!"

"And they say the river's up in the houses down at the end of the town," went on Mrs. Mangan. "In the name of pity why wouldn't you be satisfied to stay at home for this once, and you leaving me for good to-morrow!"

"Well, I'll die if I stay in this messed-up hole any longer!" said Tishy. "I don't care how wet I get——"

Presently the front door slammed behind her; her mother said to herself that of all the headstrong pieces——! And, further, that she trusted in God Larry Coppinger would be able to make a hand of her; she then, with the resignation that experience teaches to defeated mothers, went to the kitchen, and prepared a tray with tea, and carried it herself up to the Doctor's surgery.

"Francis, may I come in? I have tea for you and meself."

"Come in to be sure," replied Francis, hospitably. "I'll be glad of a cup. Wait and I'll light the gas."

The Big Doctor was a faithful man, and loved his wife. He treated her as a slave, but it was thus that she not only expected, but preferred to be treated, and the position of a favourite slave may not be without its compensations. He established her in the Patients' chair, arranging it so that the crude flare of the incandescent gas should not be in her eyes, and then sat down in his own huge chair, in comfortable proximity to her and the tea-tray.

"Well, Annie, me girl," he said. "You're looking tired enough, but there isn't one will touch you in looks to-morrow for all that! Your own daughter included!"

"Go on out of that, Francis, with your nonsense!" replied Mrs. Mangan, with a coquettish slap on the Doctor's great round knee, "you ought to be learning sense for yourself by this time!"

"Maybe I'm not so wanting in sense as you might think, Annie!" he answered, his watchful, grey-blue eyes under the over-hanging, musical brows, softening as he looked at her.

"I think one way and another, I haven't made altogether such a bad fist of things!"

"Darling lovey!" cried Mrs. Mangan, adoringly. "How could you think I meant it!"

"Well, I didn't either!" said the Doctor, with a satisfied laugh, "but I'm inclined to think that I've done better than you're aware of, or that you might give me credit for either!"

"All *I'm* aware of," said Mrs. Mangan, sitting erect, with a look of defiance, "is that there's nothing in this world, no, nor in Ireland neither, that you couldn't do if you chose to put your mind to it! So now! You needn't be talking to *me* like that! Pretending I don't know you after all those years!"

"Well, listen to me now," said the Doctor, well pleased, "Tell me what d'ye think of this marriage of Tishy's?"

"You know well what I think of it, Francis, and what everybody thinks of it, too! The smartest and the richest——"

"Well, that's all right," interrupted the Doctor, "but for a woman like yourself, that sets out to be fond of her children, its surprising that you didn't make a match yet for your son!" He looked at her with indulgent fondness, laughing at her, and she gazed back at him with her heart in her eyes, and thought him the king of men. "Well, what have you got to say to that, Mrs. Mangan? It's well for the poor boy that his father isn't so neglectful of him!"

"What do you mean, Francis? What are you talking of?"

"I'm talking of poor Barty, my dear!" said the Doctor, enjoying himself intensely, and watching his wife's handsome face with eyes that lost no shade of its quick-changing expression. "You've a high opingen of him, I know! Would you think Miss Christian Talbot-Lowry was good enough for him?"

Mrs. Mangan's mouth opened, in sheer stupefaction. She opened and shut it two or three times before speech came to her.

"Barty!" she panted; "Miss Christian Lowry! Sweet

and Blessed Mother of God! Francis, you're raving! Is it my poor Barty! They'd never look at him!"

The Doctor watched her with triumph in his face. "Don't be too sure of that! I might have an argument up my sleeve——" he checked himself as a nervous knock was heard at the door. "Who's there? Come in! Come in, can't ye?"

A telegram, the orange envelope dark with wet, was handed to him. He read it.

"No answer," he said, getting up quickly. "Well, bad manners to the woman! Such a day to choose!"

"What *is* it, lovey? *Don't* tell me it's a sick call! You couldn't *possibly* go *annywhere* this evening!" cried Mrs. Mangan, italicising, in her indignation, every second word, "and for goodness' sake, go on and tell me what was the argument you said you had?"

"My dear, I couldn't go into it properly now. I'll tell you another time. I'm bound to go, and as quick as I can, too! Run now, like a good girl, and tell Barty or Mike to get the car ready in a hurry. That wire was from Hannigan that lives below Riverstown. He says his wife'll die—she's very bad, I'm afraid—I'm booked for the job this long time——"

Mrs. Mangan, loudly expostulating, though wise in obedience from experience, flew from the room with her message, and speedily returned to find the Big Doctor still hurrying about the surgery, making his preparations, and talking as he went.

"I mightn't be back till morning, but I'll not miss the wedding, don't be afraid! I'll come as soon as I can, I promise you that!"

"Oh, Francis, love, I hate to see you go out this awful night," wailed Mrs. Mangan, following him into the little hall, and dragging his fur-lined coat off a peg, and holding it for him; "and this scorf, my darling, put it on you before you ketch your death. Will you take Mike with you?"

"I will not. He'll be wanting here. Don't delay me

now. Good-bye, girlie!" He kissed her. Then he opened the door, and with a roar, the wind and the rain hurled in, with a force that staggered him, big as he was.

"Well, such a night!" lamented Mrs. Mangan, for the twentieth time, clinging to the door; "I wish to God the telegraph wires were down before they could send for you! Oh, will you take care of yourself now, Francis?"

"Of course I will! Go in out of the wet——" he pushed himself in under the low hood of the car, and glided into the darkness.

A doctor is a dedicated man. He accepts risks with a laugh, and toil with, perhaps, a grumble, but he does not flinch. Obscure and inglorious perils are his, and hardships that only himself can gauge. Be sure that they are not unrecorded. They shine, and their splendour is hidden, like those lanterns that were hidden under the coats of the lantern-bearers. But there is, very surely, some screen, sensitive to its rays, on which that light is thrown, that will some day show us what we have been too self-centred to realise, and will dazzle us with the devotion to which we are now too much habituated to admire.

CHAPTER XL

It was Barty who had brought out the car, and, on his father's departure, he released the grip of the railings that had enabled him to keep his footing, and was, literally, blown into the house.

"Shut the door, my Pigeon-pie!" said his mother, "the wind's too strong for me."

Barty was too well accustomed to this expression of his mother's affection to resent it, and having done her bidding, he followed her into the Doctor's room, which alone had a fire in it.

"Nothing would please Tishy only to go down to the Whelplys," complained Mrs. Mangan, poking the fire, and seating herself in front of it with a long, groaning sigh of exhaustion; "some nonsense about a wreath. A wreath indeed! Any one'd be lucky that kept their hair on their heads in this wind, let alone a wreath! You'll have to go fetch her, my poor boy! I'll not be easy till I see her and Pappy home again! I thought maybe Larry might have come over, but I declare now I'm glad he did not."

"Larry's not like himself lately," said Barty, sitting down in his father's chair, and taking from his pocket a paper packet and extracting a crushed cigarette from it. "I think the loss of th' election disappointed him greatly."

"'Twas well he had Tishy to console him," said Mrs. Mangan, "it was in the nick of time she cot him!"

"It was," replied Barty, tepidly. "I think also," he went on, "he's put out about his aunt not coming down for the wedding, and even young Mrs. Kirby away. It's funny to think Coppinger's Court and Mount Music are empty now,

the two of them—or will be after to-morrow. Miss Christian went to-day."

("See now how he's talking of her!" thought his mother. "I wonder did Francis say anything to him?") Aloud she said: "It's a pity she's gone, but it mightn't be for long."

"I saw her yesterday. The Doctor sent me there for a map," said Barty, with elaborate unconcern.

("Look at that now!" again commented Mrs. Mangan to herself. "How well they never told me he'd gone to see her! Aren't men a fright the way they'll hide things!")

"She's a sweet girl, my Pidgie," she resumed, to her son, "And Pappy's always said the same thing."

Barty looked at her like a horse prepared to shy. Had his father said anything to her? The longing to speak of Christian had mastered him, but if his mother knew——

"I think I'd better go for Tishy now," he said abruptly, "It might be a job to get down the town later on."

He left the room, and Mrs. Mangan, in her husband's big chair, by his big fire, fell into tired yet peaceful ease of body and mind. How wonderful was Francis! Who but he would have dared to aspire for his children as he had? He had secured for Tishy the very pick of the country; and now, her own darling Barty! Was it possible? Yes! It was, if Francis said so! But *what* was "the argument he had up his sleeve?" Never mind! Francis would tell her when he came home. There was no hurry. But again, how wonderful was Francis!

She fell asleep. Barty woke her, coming into the room, dripping and shining in oilskins and sou'wester, like a lifeboat man.

"I couldn't get further than West Street, Mammie," he said, still breathless. "I had on my waders, but the water was up over them. They had boats going about, I believe, but I couldn't get hold of one. Tishy'll have to stay the night at the Whelplys'. I met a man that told me there was a big flood in the river, and haystacks, and cattle, and all sorts, coming down in it. It was up over the line, and

the train hardly got out. It was near putting out the engine fires."

"Oh, my God!" said Mrs. Mangan, with her big eyes that were so like Barty's fixed on his, "the Riverstown road! Oh! Francis!——" she groped at the front of her blouse for her Rosary, her lips moving in hasty supplication, her eyes wild, roving from her son's face to the blackness of the window. Suddenly she thrust back the Rosary.

"Why do you tell me these things?" she cried, furiously, "you great *omadhaun!* Is it to frighten me into my grave you want? Is it nothing to you that your father's out alone? Oh God! Oh God! Why couldn't he think of me as well as of that damned woman away at Riverstown!" She began to cry, wildly, her forehead pressed against one of the streaming panes of the window. "Oh Francis, Francis!——"

There were many more than Mrs. Mangan and her son that sat up all through that night in the Valley of the Broadwater. Trembling people in little low-lying cottages, with thatched roofs held in place with ladders, and ropes, and stones, with doors and windows barricaded against the wind. But of what avail are barricades against the creeping white lip of water, crawling in under the doors over the earthen floors, soaking in through mud-built walls, coming against them at first as a thief in the night, falling upon them later as a strong man armed?

From the lower side-streets of Cluhir the people fled before the flood to any shelter that the upper parts of the town could offer them. Ghastly stories were told of drowned cattle that were swept against the closed doors, and came pushing and banging at the windows, carried there by their conqueror as it were with mockery, to entreat for the succour that was too late.

When the pale dawn looked out through wind-torn clouds, it saw a half-mile breadth of racing water where had been pasture-fields; the yellow, foam-laced river was half way up the tall, slender arches of Cluhir Bridge, lapping ever higher,

as if in envy, to hide the sole beauty of the ignoble town. Trees, and hayricks, broken boats, and humble pieces of cottage furniture, jostled each other between the piers, tossing and dancing in grotesque gaiety, like drunken holiday-makers on their way to the sea. The great river that is credited with exacting six lives each year, was claiming its toll. How many it took that December night does not now concern us, save, indeed, where one sad house was in question, where a wife and a son waited a long night through for the man who would not return to them.

* * * * * *

Down below Cluhir, at Mount Music, old Evans crept out of the shuttered house, and fought his way in the wind, amid fallen trees, down to the big river, to see what still stood of the boathouse. The boathouse had weathered out the night. Its roof had held, its door stood firm. Old Evans surveyed it with pride.

"Aha! Protestant building!" he said, old inveterate that he was.

Then he saw on the submerged bank, amid a *débris* of broken rushes, and clots of foam, and branches, something that he knew instantly for what it was. The drowned body of a man.

Cautiously, and holding by shrubs and tree-stems, he reached the place, where, half ashore, half lying in thin flood through which tufts of grass were showing, with arms stretched out, grasping at the shore, the intruder lay. Old Evans knew well that fur-collared coat. Often enough he had held it for the Big Doctor. He had no need to turn the defeated face from its pillow in the broken reeds. He stared down at the man whom he had hated, with something of pity, more of cynicism.

"Well, ye wanted Mount Music!" he said, at last. "How d'ye like it now ye've got it?"

* * * * * *

The things that a man has accomplished we sum him up by, and the things of which he was capable, and did not accomplish, are of no account, and the net that held him is of a mesh beyond the vision of most.

Who shall pity the Big Doctor, or blame him over-much? He died in the fullness of his powers, with his ambitions, as he believed, attained. He knew himself to be a good son of the Church, a faithful husband, a successfully-scheming father. What his priest thought of him is known only to his priest, but we may be sure he regretted him. A jury of his peers would have approved him in his every action. If the paths that he had followed were sometimes tortuous, along many of them he had been guided by the *ankus* of that mahout in whose directions his faith had taught him to confide. He had lived according to the light that he had received, and in his last act he took his life in his hand, and gave it for another.

For my part, I believe that the Big Doctor viewed with a justified composure

". . . that last
"Wild pageant of the accumulated past
"That clangs and flashes for a drowning man."

CHAPTER XLI

In that same wind-wild dawn, Larry awoke, and tried to believe that he was a bridegroom, and was going to espouse Tishy Mangan in the course of the next few hours.

"C'est toujours l'imprévu qui arrive!" he told himself. That ancient ditty, "The Yeoman's Wedding," that he had often heard Dr. Mangan sing, attacked him like an illness, and enforced its galloping metres on all he did.

> "Through the valley we'll haste,
> For we've no time to waste!
> For it is my wedding morning, my wedding morning!"

The housemaid (that same Upper Housemaid who had spoken of the riff-raff of Cluhir) heard him, in the bathroom, loudly announcing his intentions.

"Ding dong! We'll gallop along!" Larry sang, and the Upper Housemaid said to her subordinate, "What a hurry he's in! Well! Bright's his fancy!"

The Upper Housemaid was rash in thus giving her opinion. Larry's fancy was far from bright, but he was of those unfortunates who, when obsessed by a tune, must yield to its importunity, even though it followed him to the steps of the scaffold.

It is not insinuated that Larry was now, metaphorically, or otherwise, in such a case. He was, as he told himself, quite prepared to go through with the job, but, he likewise told himself, it was a rotten sort of business dressing for your wedding with not a soul, bar the servants, to say good morning to, and even they looked as sour as lemons and hadn't a smile among the lot of them. Larry drank some coffee,

and crumbled some toast, and brutally and wastefully broke into a poached egg, turning what had been a triumph of snow, into a yellow peril, and gave its attendant bacon to Aunt Freddy's old Pomeranian, and found that he had finished his breakfast, and that it was no more than ten o'clock. The rain was coming down in torrents; he could not go out, not even to the stables. What on earth was he to do from now till one o'clock? The blooming wedding was at two.

He thought of it as some one else's, and realised that he so thought of it, and then just tripped himself up in the middle of the further reflection that he wished it were.

"Probably getting married is always a bore," he said to himself, consolingly. " 'E's all right when you know 'im, but you've got to know 'im fust'! Why do these rotten old songs stick in my head like this? Because I'm a fool, no doubt, and always was!"

He walked into the hall, and there surveyed his luggage, packed and ready, and appallingly new.

"It'll give the show away, even if they let us off confetti," he thought.

He wished he hadn't given in to this High Nuptial Mass business, and a big wedding, and all the rest of it, but the Doctor and Tishy were dead keen on it, and he had been sat on.

He and Tishy were going to London, and if this gale lasted, they would have a devil of a crossing. He wondered if Tishy were a good sailor. He wasn't, anyhow. He would warn her that he would be no more use to her than a sick headache, which she would probably have, to start with, and she wouldn't want another. The Mount Music people were across the Channel by this time, ahead of the gale too. Luck for them! Old Mrs. Twomey had told him they were gone, and she said they would never come back again. Silly old ass, what did she know about it?

He had wandered into his studio; now, without his own volition, almost as if he were hypnotised, he took the canvas on which he had painted Christian, from where it was lean-

ing, face inwards, against the wall, and put it on an easel. He had not looked at it since the day of conflict, and he told himself that he was now regarding it with the frigid eye of the art critic.

Yes, it was good. Better than he thought. The technique was jolly good, slick, and unworried, and the likeness was all right too. He had somehow just got hold of that ethereal look she always had had. She was hearing those voices they used to chaff her about. How she had gone for John one day, when he began ragging her about that old hymn! She always had the pluck of the devil! He frowned. She hadn't had pluck enough to stand up to her father! He would look at her picture no longer. He wouldn't think of her. She had chucked him. But his eyes were held by the eyes that he had painted; with a rush, the thought of her possessed him. She was everywhere, penetrating his very being, "his heart in her hands"; he shook in the grip of remembrance, almost of realisation, of her presence. For a moment, Time stood still for him; he hung, like a ship that has been flung up into the wind, trembling. Then the sails filled, the present re-asserted itself. He was going to marry Tishy Mangan, and Christian had chucked him. He turned the canvas again.

Why had he thought of that beastly hymn? It had got hold of him now! The measured tramp of the tune fitted itself to the tick of the clattering little tin clock on the studio chimney-piece.

"How the troops of Mid-ian,
Prowl, and prowl around!
Christian! Up and at them——"

No, that was what the Duke of Wellington said to the Guards at——Oh, *damn* the clock, anyhow! He caught it up, and pitched it across the room on to a sofa, and hurled a bundle of draperies after it and on top of it. But the tune would not stop, and the muffled, unbaffled tick of

the clock went on. He swung out of the studio, and went back to the hall.

The house had its back to the storm, and it was only when he looked down the Cluhir avenue, that he realised with what fury the rain was falling. The wind had moderated a little, but the barograph-needle was still almost off the paper it had gone so low. It was only eleven o'clock. Two hours before the motor was to come for him. He felt, as he told himself, using the adjective that has had to undertake the duties of so many others, rotten. Empty, and rather sick, and, well, generally beastly—a sort of vague funk. Yes, by Jove! He was in a regular blue funk! That was what was wrong with him. (But he certainly felt sick too.)

What on earth was he afraid of? The service couldn't last for ever, and he had barred speeches at the Collation (as Mrs. Mangan insisted on calling it). His thoughts took a twist. Surely he wasn't afraid of the Mangans? He liked Mrs. Mangan; he was quite fond of her, quite a good sort of mother-in-law she'd make. And Barty, his best man, good old Barty! And the Doctor—— Of course he wasn't afraid of the Doctor either. He had always liked him. There only remained Tishy. Hang it all! He wasn't afraid of the girl he was going to marry! She might have a bit of a temper—she certainly had been rather rattled these last few days, but you couldn't blame her for that. The very last time he had seen her—the evening before the big storm began, wasn't it?—he had overtaken her in the dark in the Mall, going home after shopping, and that long-legged cad of a fellow, Cloherty, carrying her parcels for her. By Jove! She had let drive at him after Cloherty had gone and they were in the house! By Jove, yes! He laughed a little at the remembrance. She had said it was a nice time of day for him to be coming over. She had jolly nearly cried, she was so mad with him. For the life of him he didn't know why. But, after all, that wasn't exactly temper.—Blowed if he knew what it was. He sup-

posed it was temperament—quite a different thing! He laughed and had a look at a large and splendid photograph of Miss Mangan, that had been a sort of corollary of the Dublin trousseau. Tishy was all right. Tishy was a topper! He said it aloud, and, with that, another tune, the old nigger-tune, "Nelly was a Lady," fitted itself absurdly to the words.

"Tishy was a topper!" he sang. "Last night she—— No, she didn't! By Jove, there's the motor! What's it coming at this hour for?"

He watched the car turn into the wide sweep in front of the house, and wheel round it, and draw up at the foot of the hall-door steps. It looked like the car he had hired, he knew the shover's face, but there was someone in it. He saw, with pleasure, that it was Barty who was in the car. Good old Barty, come over early to buck him up a bit. Larry sprang to the door, and as he opened it, Barty was coming up the steps. He stood still on the top step. He was very pale, Barty always had a pasty face, Larry thought, but this whiteness was different, and there was a look in his eyes that made Larry, over-strung, tuned to vibrate to ill tidings, catch his arm, and say:

"What is it? Tell me quick!"

Barty did not answer at once. He seemed as if he could not speak. He came into the hall and shut the door behind him and leaned against it, one hand still on the handle, his breath coming short and fast.

"My father was drowned last night!" he said at last, in a low, hurried voice. "He drove into the river. The flood was up on the road. Wait, Larry! That isn't all——" he went on quickly, holding up his other hand to keep Larry from speaking. "That's bad enough, God knows! But this other thing is Disgrace!"

Larry waited.

"It isn't easy to tell you," said Barty, moistening his dry lips. "There's just one good thing about it, my father didn't know——"

"What *is* it? Look sharp!"

Larry was shaking with the strain of waiting for this withheld horror.

"Tishy was caught out by the flood last night; she didn't come home——"

"What! She also——?" stammered Larry.

"I wish to God she were!" said Barty, fiercely. "No! But while my father was going to his death, maybe when he was drowning itself, she bolted with Ned Cloherty! They went to Dublin on the mail—a porter at the station saw them—there's no doubt about it!"

Larry sat down by a table, and put his head on his arms and tried to think. His brain was whirling. He had covered his eyes, because he knew if he saw Barty's tragic face again he would laugh, and if he began to laugh, he said to himself, God only knew when he would stop. It was a fatal trick of his nerves, he could never make Barty understand. He would be shocked and scandalised for ever.

The Doctor drowned! He must fix his mind on that. He mustn't think of Tishy; if he did, he knew that this horrible, inhuman surge of joy that was pulsing in him would betray itself in his face, would overwhelm him, like the flood in the river, would sweep away all decency, sympathy, would leave him bare of all that he ought to feel and express. (But to think that he hadn't to get married to-day! Oh, blessed, beautiful Cloherty!) He was going to be very angry with Cloherty, as soon as he had pulled himself together. Cloherty had behaved like a blackguard; he had blackened Larry's face; he had shamed him; had stolen his girl——(but, for all that, oh, Blessed and Beautiful——!)

Larry and Barty sat for awhile and talked, saying, as people will, at such moments, dull things over and over again, uninspired, conventional, stupid things. Both were equally afraid to say the things that were in their minds about Tishy and Cloherty; Barty, because he was so angry with her that he feared he might hurt Larry; Larry, because

he told himself he would have to sit down to the thing squarely, and think it out, before he knew what to say about it. He tried to concentrate on the death of Barty's father, but here, strangely enough, Barty seemed equally unable to respond without restraint.

"I've got to go on to Mount Music. They say the flood's down, and you can get there now," he said, presently, in the voice from which all the colour and life had died, "I've arranged for a hearse. I had a wire, early, telling me what —what had happened. I was wondering, Larry, would you come with me? I've no right, now, to ask you, but——" His tired voice died on the sentence, his mournful eyes sought Larry's and said what his lips failed to say.

"My dear old chap," said Larry, ardently, grateful for the chance of showing Barty that he bore no ill will to him, "Of course I will! Anything I could do to help you, I'd be only too glad—you mustn't think anything will make a difference——"

They said little to each other as the motor splashed along the flooded road. Each was absorbed in the effort to envisage the profound changes that had befallen himself in a single night. More than once Barty turned to Larry as if he were about to speak, and then turned away; they came to the Mount Music entrance, and as the car turned in through the gateway, Barty suddenly put his bony and pallid hand on Larry's knee.

"There's a thing no one here knows but myself, and I didn't hear it till two days ago, but I can't bear the weight of it any longer. I can't give you all the details, but you may rely on what I say being correct." He looked away from Larry out of the window. The car was running swiftly up the smooth levels of the long avenue; he knew he had no time for circumlocution. "My father told me," he began, "that in some way, between himself and the Major a lot of money had passed. The Major was greatly pressed for money—he wasn't getting his rents, and there were many liabilities—my father got hold of them all. I

think he lent him a lot of money too——" He paused an instant, then he rushed on with his story. "Anyway, whatever was between them, the Major gave my father the title-deeds of this house and the demesne in security for what he had borrowed. My father has them now, I mean," he corrected himself, "they're in my office. He said they were for me—he as good as gave them to me." Barty slowly turned a dusky red. He thought of what his father had said of Mount Music, of Christian; the arrogance, the hateful facetiousness; he had felt as if brutal hands had been laid on a saint; even now, he shuddered in spirit as remembrance came to him.

"Good God! Was that why they went away?" Larry said, with a horror that scarcely permitted of speech. "Do you mean the place isn't theirs any more?" He thought: "I wish he'd take his hand off my knee! Thank God, I'm out of it!"

"It" meant marriage with the daughter and the sister of men who could do such things.

Perhaps some telepathic vibration from that wave of repulsion reached Barty.

"You needn't think I had anything to do with it," he muttered, withdrawing his hand, "or ever will!" he added, as if to himself.

Larry remained silent; the car ground into the heavy river-gravel on the sweep in front of the house, and ceased at the door that he had not seen since that day of wrath when he had cast his cousins behind him for ever.

CHAPTER XLII

Dr. Mangan's body was still lying on the door on which it had been carried up from the river-bank. Kitchen chairs now supported it where it lay, with its burden, between the high windows, in the desolate, sheeted dining-room, surrounded by portraits of Talbots, and Lowrys, and their collaterals, who would surely have considered the presence of Francis Aloysius Mangan, dead or alive, as something of an intrusion, not to say a liberty.

Old Evans opened the hall door, and silently led the two young men through the hall, and opening the dining-room door, left them there. They stood looking down on the Big Doctor in silence. The strong, coarse face had taken on that aloof dignity, even splendour of expression, that death can confer. The servants had covered all else with a sheet; the soaked fur collar of the coat was turned up, and made a pillow for the big, iron-grey head.

With a shaking hand Barty turned back the sheet. His father's thick, powerful hands were crossed on his broad breast. The son stooped and kissed them, humbly; then he replaced the sheet, and kissed the heavy brow, from which all the marks of the turmoil of life had been smoothed.

"I believe he is near us," he whispered; he took a prayer-book from his pocket and knelt, his head resting on the covered form.

Larry knelt also. If only Barty had not told him that abhorrent thing. He tried to forget it, to pray for the soul of the man who had, as he believed, always been kind to him, and a good friend. Larry was undevout, careless, thinking little of spiritual things, so little, that he had scarcely troubled himself either to question or to accept what he

had been taught, but he was quick to respond to emotion of any kind; now he listened, with an unaccustomed reverence, to Barty's voice, brokenly whispering the prayers of his Church. Their unfamiliar beauty stirred his imagination, their appeal for mercy wakened his heart, and made him ask himself what was he that he should refuse mercy! He felt the anger, that had only been roused in him within the last few minutes, dying, merged in pity and in awe.

"By the multitude of Thy mercies, ever compassionate to human frailty, deliver him, O Lord!" Barty's husky, shaking voice murmured. "Give him, O Lord, eternal rest, and let perpetual light shine upon him——"

The door was opened and Evans said:

"The police are here, and are asking for Mr. Mangan."

Barty rose from his knees; without a word, he placed the prayer book in Larry's hands, and left the room.

Larry had risen also, but instead of following Barty he knelt again by the Big Doctor's still figure, and began to speak to him in the low voice that is the mark of recognition of the great mystery of death, and tells of that singular, sudden reverence that is bestowed on the body when the spirit has left it; a reverence that seems to imply a belief in the nearness of the freed spirit, which is unsupported by the immeasurable remoteness of the expression of the mask that it once wore.

"Doctor," said Larry, "I don't know if you can hear me, but I'll chance it. I want to tell you that it's not my fault about Tishy, and the wedding not coming off. She bolted with Ned Cloherty last night——" he checked himself, and felt he ought to apologise for talking slang, and then thought that if it were the Doctor, himself, he wouldn't mind. "Tishy liked Cloherty best," he hurried on, "and she was probably quite right, but I want you to know that I would have played up all right." Then he said, hesitating, that Barty had told him a thing that he didn't quite understand the rights of. "You must forgive me if I felt angry. I daresay there's a lot to be said on your side if I only knew

it. But I don't and you can't tell me now——" He stood up, and touching the cold brow, smoothed back the damp hair. "You were always awfully good to me," he said, and, stooping, kissed the forehead, as Barty had done, and found that his eyes were full of tears.

As he stood erect again, he saw he was not alone in the room. A girl was standing just behind him with a basket of Christmas roses in her hand, a girl who had come quietly in while he was speaking, and had waited, watching, with eyes that saw more than Larry's kneeling figure beside the dead man, listening, with senses that were perceptive of a fellow-listener, in whom were newly-learnt impulses of self-reproach and penitence.

"Christian!" said Larry, trembling, as he had trembled when he spoke to her by the Druid Stone on Cnocán an Ceoil Sidhe.

* * * * * *

THIS story, which has not aspired to being a story, and is no more than an effort to lift, for a moment, the inevitable curtain that hangs between Irish and English every-day life, shall not be tidied-up, and rounded off, even though as much, nearly, remains unsaid, as would equal what has gone before.

Summaries are tedious, and demand a skill, in making them endurable, that is bestowed on few. Its possession might, perhaps, be conceded to Mrs. Twomey (who knows more about many things than most people). Unfortunately, however, it happens that but one observation of hers, bearing on the situation, has been preserved:

"Why then, I knew well she'd have him!" she declared. "She was fond of him always!" She warmed to her theme. "And why wouldn't she be fond of him? Sure the dog'd be fond of him!"

From which it may be gathered that Mrs. Twomey, who, like King David, thought badly of dogs, holding that they were as unimpressionable as they were savage, had a high opinion of young Mr. Coppinger's powers of attraction.

Possibly, also, the statement may be taken as an indication that she had no sympathy with the views of the Spirit of the Nation in the matter of what are called "Mixed Marriages."

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